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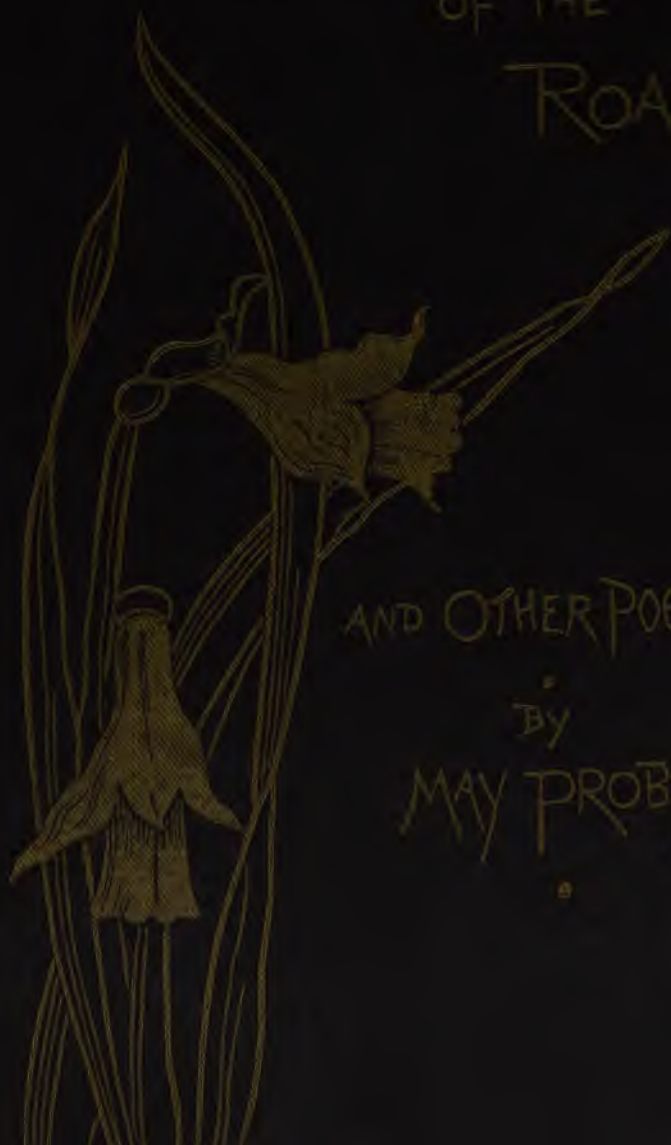
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A BALLAD
OF THE
ROAD



AND OTHER POEMS

By

MAY PROBYN



A BALLAD OF THE ROAD,

And other Poems.

P O E M S

BY

MAY PROBYN.

Square 16mo. Cloth, gilt. Price 3s. 6d.

PRESS NOTICES.

"Very sweet, very simple, and very skilful."—*Vanity Fair*.

"The prettiest and daintiest volume of verse we have met with for a long time. She has a fresh sweet voice, very delightful to listen to. It is positively fascinating to read these bright pure verses. . . . Hers are exquisite fancies, tender thoughts, and a joyous delight in the beauties of colour and sound and summer; hers too is a sweet melancholy, the fair sorrow of love which lingers in the lines of our old English ballads. There are many of May Probyn's poems we should like to quote had we space, especially 'Soapsuds' which is a delicious piece of work. She has written a volume of verse that is worth reading, some bits of which linger like perfume in the memory."—*Westminster Review*.

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W. SACHELL AND CO., 19, TAVISTOCK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

A BALLAD OF THE ROAD,

And other Poems.

BY

MAY PROBYN,

Author of "Poems."

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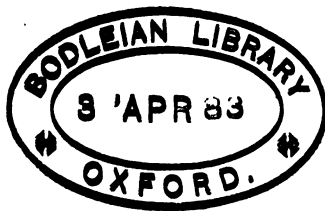
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To

Alfred Tennyson.

*If, Poet ! Master ! song of mine should wait
Till it were meet to stand within your gate,
For ever would it tarry. So, I send it,
With all its flaws and failures, and commend it
To your good mercy—and, though you shall blame
This foolish song you shelter with your name,
Think not, to intercept your musings stately
It seeks you, but because it yearns so greatly
To cast itself, stammering and incomplete,
Where, Poet ! Master ! it may kiss your feet.*

M. P.

FERNLEIGH,

December, 1882.

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CONTENTS.

BALLADS—

	PAGE
A BALLAD OF THE ROAD	3
JANE SHORE	10
BOY BUTTERFLY	26
THE BEES OF MYDDELTON MANOR	29
THE MODEL	37
THE PLATELAYERS	41
SONNET	45
THE PAINTING OF A FAN	46
MARY TRENT	53

LYRICS—

A E I	69
"AS THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS"	71
DUCKIE	74
THE RETREAT	77
SUNDAY EVENING	79
REVELATION	81
BARCAROLLE	85
ANNIVERSARIES	86
THE END OF THE JOURNEY	87
A SONG OUT OF SEASON	89
TRIPLET	90

LYRICS (*continued*)—

	PAGE
BLOSSOM	94
TENEBRÆ	95
ADRIFT	96
CHANGES	98
“MORE THAN THEY THAT WATCH FOR THE MORNING”	99
A VISTA	101
NOËL	103

A NOSEGAY FROM A FRENCH GARDEN—

GRANDMOTHER	107
GOING TO MARKET	109
BALLADE OF LOVERS	111
TRIOLETS	113
VILLANELLE	116
RONDEAU	117
DISENCHANTED	118
RONDELET	120
RONDELET	121
RONDEL	122
RONDEL	123
RONDEL	124
THE EVE OF THE WEDDING	125
LAI	128
KYRIELLE	129

Ballads.

BALLADS.

A BALLAD OF THE ROAD.

*"Daffydowndilly
Is coming to town,
In a yellow petticoat,
And a green gown."*—OLD RHYME.

"BUSK ye, fair maids, in your bonniest gown !"
The lasses went singing, the length of the street ;
Like raindrops in summer time, tinkling down,
Fell on the pavement their patter of feet.
"Choose a brave ribbon for binding your head—
Pull out the yellow instead o' the red !
Don a gay stocking and best buckled shoe—
Choose ye the yellow instead o' the blue !
Busk ye, fair maids, in your finest to day—
Choose out the yellow instead o' the grey !
Choose out the yellow instead o' the brown !
Daffydowndilly is coming to town !"

PART I.

THE month it was March, and the wind was blowing,
Thick in the meadows the daffodils growing.
She stood in the grass, and picked her a posy—
Her fingers were white, with the tips just rosy.
She was Squire Merriman's youngest maid—
The rest were all wedded while she delayed,
Sweet Mistress Ann, like a rose in the shade.

Came a bold horseman a-galloping by,
When the dusk was creeping across the sky,—
Pulled up in front of her there on the heath,
Pistols in holster, and sword in its sheath,—
“Your gold or your silver, my pretty young maid !
Stand and deliver !” hat doffing, he said.

A daffodil blossom she stooped to pull,
And faced him erect, with her apron full,—
“My gold I wear on my hand in a ring—
Yield it I would not, tho’ you were the king !
A ring on a finger, and nothing more—
My love put it there, when he went to the war ;
He only shall get it, that takes me to wife—
Rather than it, you may have my life !”

She thought that he smiled thro’ his small black mask,
But she would not parley, she would not ask ;
From saddle he sprang, and his long plume swept
The grass and the daisy-buds where she stepped.
“Nay, sweetheart,” he said, “for I would not take
That keepsake of thine for a kingdom’s sake !
Give but thy daffodil posy to me—
And none other gold will I ask of thee !”

Half in her earnestness, half in her sport,
She made him the curtsey they make at the court.
Like a gay town gallant he wore his sword ;
She thought that he bowed to her like a lord.
The posy he took, and the hand he kissed—
“ Good luck,” he said, “ to the next lover’s tryst !
God send that I meet ye some other day !
And, sweet, when your spark comes again this way,
Tell him, if aught in his courtesy lack,
Swords he must measure with Gentleman Jack.”

PART II.

At Merriman Hall, in the Squire’s best sack,
The toast of the night was “ Gentleman Jack.”
Down in the kitchen, the gay and the sober
Pledged him all round, in foaming October ;
And the tavern clowns, amid tankards’ clang,
Sat shouting his health, till the rafters rang.

The girls would go singing for roundelay,
“ Ho, busk ye, maids, in your bravest to-day—
Daffydowndilly is coming this way !
All in a waistcoat of bright bonny yellow—
Steed never carried a comelier fellow !

“ His sword and his pistols were made to kill,
When he met with a wench on the brow o’ the hill,
The youngest of seven and promised to wife,
As slim and as fair as the garden lilies ;
He spared her toll, and he sold her her life
Just for a handful of daffydowndillies.”

PART III.

The month it was March, and the bells a-tolling—
Like ribbon of yellow its length unrolling,
Each of them clad in a daffodil gown,
The lasses went singing all over the town,
“Busk ye, fair maids, in your finest array—
Daffydowndilly is coming to-day !

“Step to the lattice that looks on the street ;
Lean out, young maids, at the sound of our feet ;
Choose ye a kirtle of yellow to wear,
And a ribbon of yellow for binding your hair,
Busk ye, in haste, in your bonniest gown,
And follow us, follow us over the town ! ”

The sheriff was waiting, the flag was black,
The hangman was ready for Gentleman Jack,
Gentleman Jack, who had shot at an earl,
And rifled his coach, and wounded his churl.
Nearer and nearer the tumbril rolled,
And, like a long ribbon of flowering gold,
The lasses came ringing it round about,
And drowning its noise in their warbled shout,
“Daffydowndilly has spared us a life—
God give him rescue, and send him a wife !
Follow him, maids, in your bonniest gown—
Daffydowndilly has come into town ! ”

The soldiers looked on with a secret smile ;
Each had a sweetheart that sang in the file.
They waited to hear what the sergeant would say ;
But the sergeant was staring the opposite way.

They waited to see what the sheriff would do ;
But the sheriff was stooping to buckle his shoe.
And the mob surged thick in the tumbril's track,
With volleys of cheering for Gentleman Jack.

Squire Merriman's maid was sweetest of all,
So fearless, and gracious, and slim, and tall !
In a yellow sacque, that was goodly to see,
She stood at the foot of the gallows tree,
And daffodils, golden as March could make,
She carried for posy and last year's sake.

Smiling undaunted, stood Gentleman Jack,
With his arms fast pinioned behind his back.
Her daffodils down at his feet she laid,
" A life in exchange for a life," she said.
She lifted her eyes to his face above,
And, lo ! 'twas the face of her own true love.

Oh, the fair red in her cheek that played,
Like a rose when the sun strikes into the shade !
Nearer she pressed, where the hangman moved,
Fitting the noose on the neck that she loved.
Screened of the lasses that closed her round,
She snipped at the cord where his hands were bound.

The rope was ready, the death bell tolled,
From under his tread the tumbril rolled—
Or ever so much as a rope could shake
Mistress Ann stood straight in the tumbril's wake,
Before serjeant, and sheriff, and all beholders,
Red as a rose, with his feet on her shoulders.

Oh, the great cry that rang from the crowd,
The "rescue," the "rescue" they shouted aloud !
All way to the soldiers was barred and shut,
As a hundred rushed up the rope to cut.
The serjeant stood mute, but he tried to frown ;
The hangman swore, but he flung them a crown ;
And Gentleman Jack, aloft in the throng,
Was hoisted a hero, and carried along.

But young Mistress Ann, at the sheriff's knee,
Was weeping warm tears, while she made her plea.
"Your duty is done, sir sheriff," quoth she ;
"You may chance it again, if so your will is—
But his life it is mine, since mine to me
He sold for a posy of daffydowndillies."

The month it was March, and the bells began ringing
At sound of the shouts, and the lasses all singing.
Said the sheriff, "Hanged has the rascal been—
He cannot be hanged twice over, I ween."
Said the serjeant, "The sword that would reach him, now,
Must strike him through each of the wenches, I trow."
And the hangman took down the flag that was black,
And ran up the merry old Union Jack.

Oh, the gay couples that tripped up the street,
While the bells were rung, and the drums were beat !
It was Gentleman Jack that marched before,
'Mid kerchiefs that waved from window and door ;
It was young Mistress Ann that walked by his side,
The tears still wet, while she blushed in her pride,
Through daffodils out of the balconies flung,
With a blessing upon her from every tongue.

Nothing she felt, while the maids did sing,
But his clasp of the hand where she wore the ring ;
Nothing she knew, when she sought to speak,
But the touch of his kiss that fell on her cheek,—
“ He only shall have it that takes thee to wife—
Is it Gentleman Jack shall get it, my life ? ”

The soldiers were rollicking over the town,
Each with his lass in her yellow gown,
All of them singing, the length of the street,
“ Follow, young maids, at the sound of our feet !
Choose out the yellow instead o’ the blue—
Daffydowndilly is coming to woo !
Choose out the yellow instead o’ the red—
Daffydowndilly is coming to wed !
Busk ye, sweethearts, in your bonniest gown—
Daffydowndilly is coming to town ! ”

JANE SHORE.

SHE was the bonniest wench, pardie,
Ever sat at a spinning wheel,
That ever ran wild on a daisied lea,
Or on chapel stone did kneel,—

Liker fair ladye than burgher maid,
Tender, and fearful of pain—
The mercer lads held back afraid,
And we called her “Countess Jane.”

She was not a woman half full-grown
When they gave her, in haste and heat,
To a goldsmith wight, with a heart like stone,
That lived in Lombard Street.

I robed her fair for the marriage day,
While fast her salt tears ran—
“Sweetheart, but you should have said them nay,
And chosen a better man !

“For sure, there are better,” I said, “to have,
As round the merry world wags,
Than a greybeard loon, with a foot in the grave,
And a heart in his money bags.”

But she only plucked at the marriage gown,
And pale as the dead did grow—
“Ah, nurse!” she moaned, “they chide, they frown—
Good nurse, I fear them so!”

The priests and the Abbey boys, they sang;
And the flowers were scattered down;
And long they pealed, and loud they rang,
The bells of London town.

Home he took her to Lombard Street,
Bolted and barred the door;
And we heard no more of her dancing feet,
We saw her smile no more.

* * * *

The Monday it was of Whitsuntide,
Late in the afternoon—
Lasses and lads a-pleasuring hied,
Like bees that swarm in June.

But I am old—my time is done
For fiddle and romp and rout,
And to Lombard Street my way alone
I wended in and out.

Iron-bound was the door of oak,
Where I knocked and knocked again,
Till at length the bolt, by a strenuous stroke,
Shot back, with creak and strain,

And, lo! ’twas she that peeped and spied,
Nor page, nor maid drew nigh—
“Step in, step in, my nurse!” she cried,
“Here’s none at home but I!”

She led me over the rush-strewn stone
Into her kitchen place ;
And I felt like a bird, whose brood is flown,
As I looked on her young, sad face ;

A shadow had grown in her eyes of grey,
That had never been known to me
Since first asleep at my breast she lay,
Or rocked upon my knee.

About my neck she flung her arm,
And twice she tried to speak ;
And I felt, as she kissed me, wet and warm,
Her tears upon my cheek.

“ Sweetheart, why gad ye not abroad
To look at the show ? ” quoth I,
“ Where with banner and drum, thro’ each town ward,
The Worshipful Guilds go by,—

“ With bells a-ringing, and flags afloat,
And lusty trumpet blare—
The river’s alive with barge and boat—
And ‘ Countess Jane ’ not there ? ”

She beckoned me where the board was spread
With linen to wash and mend ;
She told how she must bake the bread,
And the butter-churning tend ;

The brass she burnished, the stone she swept,
She knelt to scour the floor—
“ And this is to be the wife,” she wept,
“ Of wealthy Master Shore ! ”

Her kirtle was coarse blue linen stuff—
Nor clasp, nor chain had she—
But a cookmaid's apron, brown and rough,
With pockets two and three,—

Her sleeves rolled elbow-high, and bare
Her arms as white as milk,
Who was fit to have walked with pearl-bound hair,
In a brodered gown of silk.

“He hires no serving-wench,” she said,
“Since I can work unpaid—
No 'prentice lad to be housed and fed,
And guess where the gold is laid ;

“By day, he bids at wharf and mart ;
By night, he counts his gold,
The while I sit and spin apart,
And shiver with the cold ;

“And now 'tis summer,” said she, “worse !
With nought but this to wear—
With the rest all bravely clad, my nurse,
Not a penny to spend or spare !

“Would God they had wound me in my shroud
Or ever I was wed !—”
And the city bells, they pealed aloud,
And clamoured overhead ;

Out of the west, the sunset flame
Splashed gold along the floor ;
In the hush that followed her cry, there came
A knock on the outer door.

I marked the red, with sudden shock,
Rush up her cheek to stain—
“The King,” she faltered, “’tis his knock—”
And fast she paled again.

And when she named the name of the King
I felt there was trouble nigh,
As the bird that knows her young a-wing,
And sees the falcon fly.

“Now, nurse, my nurse, how shall I do?
Shall I let him in?” she sighed,
“For my husband raged, and wrought me rue,
When the King’s last gift he spied—

“Just a ribbon that came from a Flanders loom—
But his face grew white with ire,
And he locked me into the topmost room,
And flung the gift in the fire.

“Yet was it fault of mine that day,
When I ran to unbar the door,
That one, in simple knight’s array,
Did ask for Master Shore?

“He took me for a serving-maid,
Aproned and elbow-bare;
Some little foolish thing he said,
About ‘my nut-brown hair!’

“A gold broad-piece he proffered me,
Fair rings were on his hand;
But, saving those, that it was he,
How should I understand?

"I spurned and I sent his broad doubloon
A-spinning over the floor,
'You fling your gold,' I said, 'too soon,
'Tis I am Mistress Shore.'

"'And King of England, I,' quoth he—
His white plume swept the stone—
'Pity it is to find, pardie,
Such comely dame alone !'

"I had him into the counting-place,
Where the gems are stored and sold—
He sat and dallied a goodly space,
With his errand still untold.

"'Twas an errand that brought him another day,
And another day again—
Even Kings, my nurse, have debts to pay,
And loan must crave full fain.

"But when last he came, he pledged no ring ;
He brought the ribbon instead,
Yellow as daffodil bank in spring,
And bound about my head.

"Why should I be sober, who am not old ?
Why walk in sad attire ?
But my husband seized the ribbon gold,
And flung it on the fire."

Her cheek took light from the scarlet sun
That blazed athwart her hair—

"Why should not I welcome the only one
That smiles, and speaks me fair ?"

And again thro' the stillness clamoured the knock,
But she faltered not again ;
And I felt, as she stole her hand to the lock,
Like the bird whose brood is slain.

He came like a man who knows his way,
In simple knight's attire ;
He brought no following, nor array ;
He brought nor page, nor squire.

"What ho, sweet Jane !" he cried to her,
While the blush leapt into her cheek,
"Methought in the street, for all my stir,
Thou hadst kept me till next week !

"But till midnight, or till cock crow, sweet,
Is thy goodman away ;
With the Goldsmith's Guild he sits at meat,
'Mid toast and roundelay.

"Twere shame, in sooth, if thou shouldst pine
Forlorn, and he so gay !
None fitter than thou, in this realm of mine,
To hold high holiday !"

He had brought her a fair brocaded gown,
All wrought in cloth of gold,
With pearls thick broidered, up and down,
Thro' every fret and fold ;

A clasp of gold, and a golden pin ;
A wimple sewn with pearls,
That made a frame for the face within,
Like the sheath where the flower uncurls.

She flushed, and she paled, and she shook her head,
And she turned from the glistening gear,—
“Heaven bless the thought, my liege,” she said,
“And the gift that I may not wear !”

“What, Jane !” quoth he, “dear heart, for shame !
Art grown so proud a thing ?
A boon to a subject—where’s the blame ?
Why else was I born a King ?”

Her hand he caught, and coyed, and drew,
Till it touched the silken weeds ;
Her thought he swayed with less ado
Than the wind that rustles the reeds.

Roundly I chid, as beseems the old—
What other was left to do ?
But I half forgave her the gown of gold,
When I marked how fair she grew,

When liker a queen than a burgher dame,
A sight one’s heart to glad,
Robed and ready, adown she came—
Ah me, the face she had !

I tarried till dusk and darkness fell ;
I tarried till dead of night ;
I scarce my fears to myself could tell,
Yet I felt that I feared aright.

Her linen I wrung, with the best of my speed,
I ranged it smoothly spread ;
I finished the dough she began to knead,
And I baked her a batch of bread.

I mended the sheet, where the thread was left ;
I fetched her spinning wheel,
I spun her a measure, warp and weft,
A goodly web to feel.

For the morrow's morn her fire I laid,
Drew water, and washed the boards—
And she, in the canopy's silken shade,
Was sitting among the lords—

In the royal barge, with the gilded prow,
Was floating down the stream,
With a boat of fluting and song in tow,
Beneath the flambeau's gleam,

While a swarm of shallops, in their wake,
With torch and with music came,
Till the whole of the river seemed to break
In diamond ripples of flame.

Alack for the gold and the silver cloth !
Alack for the shimmering fur !
As the candle flame to the dazzled moth,
Soft raiment seemed to her.

* * *

'Twas a winter's night, and snow on the ground,
Near upon Noël tide ;
There was bitter cold in the wind's bleak sound,
There was ice by the river side.

Lingered a minute Countess Jane,
Unrobed, and ready for sleep ;
Her feet, as white as the snow new lain,
On the naked floor did peep ;

Her fingers toyed with the silken stuff,
Folded away in her chest—
She half forgot that her work was rough,
And she so meanly dressed,—

Forgot that below the fire had died,
And the frost could be felt instead,
Till fain she had been to slip aside,
And steal away to her bed.

A writ from the King did the garment bear,
“This service, from her poor thrall,
Let Countess Jane vouchsafe to wear
At Yuletide festival.”

She heard no footstep creak below ;
She heard no opening door ;
She saw no shadow enter slow,
And creep across the floor ;

She knew not the goldsmith stood at her back,
And watched behind her there,
Till, like a bloodhound on the track,
He gripped her by the hair.

“Out of my doors, thou jade !” he hissed—
The grasp of his hand was grim ;
“Thy paramour waits thee all unkissed—
Out ! get thee gone to him !”

He wound his hand in her unbound hair—
Unrobed, with her naked feet,
He cursed and he dragged her down the stair,
And flung her into the street.

Up in the windy, star-strewn sky
The Christmas bells did ring ;
A clatter of horses' hoofs drew nigh,
And a sound of trumpeting.

Fresh from some midnight rout or fray
A handful of knights rode by ;
The winter moon shone white as day ;
The winter wind shrieked high.

Closer she huddled herself to the wall,
But she could not hide from the moon ;
White, she stood, in the sight of them all,
With neither cloak nor shoon.

"By the bones of Saint Bride," quoth one, "before
Never I saw such thing !
Now, body o' me ! 'tis Mistress Shore—"
And the voice was the voice of the King.

"Fetch her, fair sirs !" he cried, in haste,
"For, by my halidome !
Housed shall she be, and her wrongs redressed
So soon as the day be come."

No strength was left to storm nor stir,
No strength to bid them hold ;
They wrapped her warm in minever,
That closed with a clasp of gold.

She felt them bear and heave her aloft,
'Mid the hoofs' and the bridles' ring ;
She felt an arm steal round her soft,
And it was the arm of the King.

He held her up, where she lay half dead
Across his saddle bow ;
He murmured, " Sweet, be comforted—
None, none shall harm thee now ! "

* * *

Or ever the sunrise flushed the sky
Barefoot she stood at my door—
A rush-roofed cabin is mine, anigh
The wharf and the river shore.

" I up, and I fled through the palace yard
Ere the day," she said, "'gan break—
Oh, hide me, keep me, nurse, in thy guard,
For all the saints' dear sake ! "

Her face was ashy, and worn with fear ;
Her hair was all unbound ;
And, flung a-top of her loose night gear,
The King's cloak wrapped her round.

I lighted her up the little stair ;
I laid her in my bed,
While she buried her cheek in her tangled hair,
And moaned, and prayed to be dead.

She would not sleep, and she would not eat,
But she stayed as still as stone,
And counted the steps that passed in the street,
Till I thought her wits were flown.

A young foot page was the first that came,
With henchmen at his back,—
" My lord," he said, " would know, good dame,
If aught your ladye lack—

"His heart is sad till he hear her state,
And in what case she be—"
"Sir page," I made him answer straight,
"No ladye is housed with me."

The next that came was a belted earl,
With a stately train of knights—
"The King," he said, "would punish the churl
Puts ladye to such plights.

"Hence will I not without speech of her—
I pray you lead the way—"
"She is safe at home," I said, "fair sir,
And long at home may she stay!"

But at the last came one alone,
In simple knight's array,
That said, "Nor sceptre, dame, nor throne
Can bring me peace this day—"

Long time he strove, with threat and oath ;
Me, threat nor oath did move,
Till, sudden and soft, while we wrangled both,
A footfall stole above—

And, lo ! she stood on the little stair,
Half blinded and statue-still,
As drawn by the sound of his voice she were
Ever against her will.

He turned about—he cried on her name—
What bootéd her tears and alarms ?
As the moth reels into the candle flame,
She fled straight into his arms.

*

*

*

Oh ! ever and ever the years rolled on,
Till the King fell sick and died ;
And ever and ever I dwelt alone,
In the hut by the river side.

There were rumours noised of how she lived,
That made my old heart ache,—
How, still, her beauty grew and thrived,
And the King was befooled for her sake.

But the King in his graveclothes lay, before
He had reigned a score of years,
And nothing was left to Mistress Shore
But shame, methought, and tears ;

For we heard how the Lord Protector swore,
Gloster, the humpbacked duke,
That the sorceries of the witch, Jane Shore,
Must be cursed by bell and book ;

In the council chamber he stood, and bared
His withered shrunk right arm ;
And the dukes and earls all gaped and stared,
Signed cross, and muttered psalm ;

But my lord of Hastings, the King's dear friend,
Harboured her under his roof,
And vowed he would hold her there to the end,
Though all England brought the proof.

Sudden one night, rose a yelling and din,
As I sat and mended my fire—
The door was hurled open, and one rushed in,
Dripping with rain and mire.

The river muttered hoarse beneath—
The night was black as pitch—
“Nurse, hide me !” shrieked she through her teeth,
“They hunt me for a witch !

“Hastings,” she said, “lies dead in his blood,
Trapped like a rat in a ditch !
They hewed off his head on a log of wood,
And they hunt me for a witch !”

She was faint with running, and haggard with fears ;
Strained were her eyes, and wild ;
But her face was yet, as I looked through my tears,
The face of my lovesome child.

I hurried her out to the back of my cot,
Close down by the river bank,
Where by day the ooze and the mud-beds rot,
And the slimy sedge grows rank.

She crouched, where the reeds met over her head,
And lapped the old bridge pier,
While, above, the shouts and the trampling tread
Came ever more near and near.

They searched the hut from roof to floor,
With halberd-thrust and lance ;
Across the river, from shore to shore,
Their torches leapt a-dance ;

Till baffled rang the rabble's roar
That scoured the river side,
And no hole was left, the soldiers swore,
Where so much as a cat could hide.

Over the bridge they filed close, close,
Within touch of her wave-washed lair,
A bristling rank of steel, that rose
Black on the torches' glare.

Cowering, creeping up through the reeds,
Panting, and half in swoon,
With the raindrops running like strings of beads
From wimple unto shoon,

Fierce-eyed, and crouched, and ready to spring,
She grovelled at my knee,
And moaned, and raved, "My King ! My King !
Would God I were with thee !" . . .

I felt my old heart like to break,
At length, when they tore her away,
I, that had nursed her asleep and awake,
And taught her first to pray.

Bishop and Cardinal marshalled round,
Ah, God ! to see her stand,
With the penance sheet about her wound,
And the taper in her hand—

Alas, such day, my lamb, for thee !
While the city bells did toll—
Sing Miserere Domine—
God's mercy on thy soul !

BOY BUTTERFLY.

HUSH, hush, good gentlemen, for Heaven's love !

A word, a breath, a whisper in the crowd
May shake him, where he balances above—

But what,—what is it ? did I speak so loud ?
What ! is he hurt ? ah, true ! how I forget !

I thought I saw the square of carpet spread,
The tinsel, and the sawdust, and the net,
While he, like a flying flower overhead—
Your pardon, sirs ! my poor brain wanders so,
I think I see it everywhere I go.

Ah, true !—here's nothing spread but God's green grass ;
The place is free to all the folk that pass,

With hum of bees for music, and for show
This little hillock, where the daisies grow.

Such a small grave—he was so small, you see !

With such a curly head, as bright as gold—
Would clasp my neck, and climb upon my knee—

A little fellow, sir—not eight years old.

Brown eyes he had, that grew so wide with tears
At some new flight he scarce would try for fears—

He had not braved it, but they beat him so,
He dared not let his tears even overflow.

What scanty joy he found, as the weeks went by,
I think I made—"his father," sir? not I!

I never had a youngster of my own—
His mother sold him to our manager,

Almost as soon as he could stand alone,
Straight from her breast, her very flesh and bone.
From then to now, we've heard no more of her—
The poor dumb beasts are better mothers, sir.

I never knew a child that learned so quick—
Just looked, and leaped, and mastered all the trick.
Our bills were posted up in every town,
The "famed Boy Butterfly" and "Laughing Clown"—
I was the clown, I made the people sport,
Grinned, jested, jibed—a human ape, in short!
Starving, or sick, or with a heart that broke,
No matter! I must caper for the folk.

Why, once, sir, when the child lay sick a-bed,
And never could pull through, the women said,
I used to run in for three minutes' space,
Three minutes' interval that left me free,
And, with my motley clothes, and powdered face,
Quick snatch him up, and nurse him on my knee—
He could not bear me, sir, out of his sight—
His small, hot fingers locked my hand so tight,
They seemed to burn themselves into the palm—
His pretty, restless head upon my arm—
And then the bell would tinkle forth again,
And I must loose his hold, and lay him down,
And leave him fretting for me in his pain,
And tumble in the ring, "*the Laughing Clown*,"
Cut antics, sir, my eyelids hot with tears,
Half dazed and deafened by the people's cheers,

And frolic out, my heels above my head,
Thinking, each time, that I should find him dead.

“How did it happen?” nay, I cannot tell—
There’s none that knew exactly what befell.

Our place was crowded, gallery to pit,
A sea of heads all round the railed-in slopes,
And up, far, far above, you saw him flit,
Light as a bird among the giddy ropes.
And then—he lost his balance, or misreckoned,
Snatched at the rope too late by half a second,
Or something may have slipped a hair’s-breadth wrong—
The swiftest help had been too late to save,
And where’s the use of guessing now?—he gave
One little shrill, fierce cry, and shot headlong,
An instant’s flash of gold and spangled pink—
There was not time to turn, not time to think—
Sheer down he rushed—his little curly head
Just smote the sawdust, sir, and he was dead.

Kind gentlemen, be pitiful I pray !
You would not drive the poor old clown away ?
Soon—very soon—some chilly eventide,
I shall lie down to sleep here at his side,
Shall lose the sound of little birds that sing,
And so forget the sawdust and the ring—
Some day—some day—why not this very day ?—
Forgive me, sirs ! I know not all I say.

*THE BEES OF MYDDELTON MANOR.*¹

17TH CENTURY.

BUZZING, buzzing, buzzing, my golden-belted bees—
My little son was seven years old—the mint-flower
 touched his knees ;
 Yellow were his curly locks ;
 Yellow were his stocking-clocks ;
His plaything of a sword had a diamond in its hilt—
 Where the garden beds lay sunny,
 And the bees were making honey,
“ For God and the king—to arms ! to arms ! ” the day
 long would he lilt.

Smocked in lace and flowered brocade, my pretty son of
 seven
Wept sore because the kitten died, and left the charge
 uneven.
 “ I head one battalion, mother—
 Kitty,” sobbed he, “ led the other !
 And when we reached the bee-hive bench
 We used to halt and storm the trench—

* There is a superstition in many parts of England, that, when a member of the family dies, the bees will take offence and go away, unless the fact is announced to them, and their hives put into mourning.

30 THE BEES OF MYDDELTON MANOR.

If we could plant our standard here,
With all the bees a-buzzing near,
And fly the colours safe from sting,
The town was taken for the king ! ”
Flitting, flitting over the thyme, my bees with the yellow
band—
My little son of seven came close, and clipped me by the
hand ;
A wreath of mourning cloth was wound
His small left arm and sword-hilt round,
And on the thatch of every hive a wisp of black was
bound.
“ Sweet mother, we must tell the bees, or they will swarm
away—
Ye little bees ! ” he called, “ draw nigh, and hark to what
I say,
And make us golden honey still for our white wheaten
bread,
Though never more
We rush on war
With Kitty at our head—
Who’ll give the toast
When swords are crossed,
Now Kitty lieth dead ? ”

Buzzing, buzzing, buzzing, my bees of yellow girth—
My son of seven changed his mood, and clasped me in
his mirth.
“ Sweet mother, when I grow a man and fall on battle-
field,”
He cried, and down in the daisied grass upon one knee
he kneeled,

THE BEES OF MYDDELTON MANOR. 31

"I charge thee, come and tell the bees how I for the king
lie dead ;
And thou shalt never lack fine honey for thy wheaten
bread !"

* * * * *

Flitting, flitting, flitting, my busy bees, alas !
No footstep of my soldier son came clinking through the
grass.

Thrice he kissed me for farewell,
And far on the stone his shadow fell ;
He buckled spurs and sword-belt on, as the sun began to
stoop,
Set foot in stirrup, and sprang to horse, and rode to join
his troop.

To the west he rode, where the winds were at play,
And Monmouth's army mustering lay ;
Where Bridgewater flew her banner high,
And gave up her keys, when the Duke came by ;
And the maids of Taunton paid him court
With colours their own white hands had wrought ;
And red as a field, where blood doth run,
Sedgemoor blazed in the setting sun.

Broidered sash and clasp of gold, my soldier son, alas !
The mint was all in flower, and the clover in the grass—

"With every bed

In bloom," I said,

"What further lack the bees,

That they buzz so loud,

Like a restless cloud,

Among the orchard trees ?"

No voice in the air, from Sedgemoor field,
Moaned out how Grey and the horse had reeled ;

32 THE BEES OF MYDDELTON MANOR.

Met me no ghost, with haunting eyes,
That westward pointed 'mid its sighs,
And pulled apart a bloody vest,
And showed the sword-gash in its breast.

Empty hives, and flitting bees, and sunny morning
hours—

I snipped the blossomed lavender, and the pinks, and the
gillyflowers ;

No petal trembled in my hold—

I saw not the dead stretched stark and cold

On the trampled turf at the shepherd's door,

In the cloak and the doublet Monmouth wore,

With Monmouth's scarf and headgear on,

And the eyes, not closed, of my soldier son ;

I knew not how, ere the cocks did crow, the fight was
fought in the dark,

With nought for guide but the enemy's guns, when the
flint flashed out a spark,

Till, routed at first sound of fire, the cavalry broke and
fled,

And the hoofs struck dumb, where they spurned the
slain, and the meadow stream ran red ;

I saw not the handful of horsemen spur through the dusk,
and out of sight,

My soldier son at the Duke's left hand, and Grey that
rode on his right.

Buzzing, buzzing, buzzing, my honey-making bees—

They left the musk, and the marygolds, and the scented
faint sweet peas—

They gathered in a darkening cloud, and swayed, and
rose to fly—

THE BEES OF MYDDELTON MANOR. 33

A blackness on the summer blue, they swept across the sky.

Gaunt and ghastly with gaping wounds—(my soldier son, alas !)

Footsore and faint, the messenger came halting through the grass.

The wind went by and shook the leaves—the mint-stalk shed its flower—

And I missed the murmuring round the hives, and my boding heart beat slower.

His soul we cheered with meat and wine—

With women's craft and balsam fine

We bathed his hurts, and bound them soft,

While west the wind played through the croft,

And the low sun dyed the pinks blood red,

And, straying near the mint-flower shed,

A wild bee wantedon o'er the bed.

He told how my son, at the shepherd's door, kept guard in Monmouth's clothes,

While Monmouth donned the shepherd's frock, in hope to cheat his foes.

A couple of troopers spied him stand,

And bade him yield to the King's command—

"Surrender, thou rebel as good as dead,

A price is set on thy traitor head !"

My soldier son, with secret smile,

Held both at bay for a little while,

Dealt them such death-blow as he fell,

Neither was left the tale to tell ;

With dying eyes, that asked no grace,

They stared on him for a minute's space,

And felt that it was not Monmouth's face.

34 THE BEES OF MYDDELTON MANOR.

Crimsoned through was Monmouth's cloak, when
soldier dropped at their side—

"Those knaves will carry no word," he said, and
smiled in his pain, and died.

"Two days," told the messenger, "did we lie

Hid in the field of peas and rye,

Hid in the ditch of brake and sedge,

With the enemy's scouts down every hedge,

Till Grey was seized, and Monmouth seized, that un-
the fern did crouch,

Starved, and haggard, and all unshaved, with a few
peas in his pouch."

* * * * *

No music soundeth in my ears, but a passing bell t
tolls

For gallant lords with head on block—sweet Hea
receive their souls !

And a mound, unnamed, in Sedgemoor grass,

That laps my soldier son, alas !

The bloom is shed—

The bees are fled—

Myddelton luck is done and dead.

THE MODEL.

NOT three years since—and now he asks my name !
Not know me ?—God ! am I so changed, so changed ?

Now that I stay to seek it, how it stares
Out of this scrap of wretched looking-glass,
Just big enough to hold my face, no more.
'Twas in this same, small, ragged bit of glass
I looked, when first I wore the little pearls
He gave me for my ears, three Easters back—
Poor little paltry things enough they are !
But then, they seemed almost too beautiful
To wear in such a weekday world as mine.

Still looking for it—yes, I understand,
I see the reason why he sent to-day,
And fetched me, having passed me in the street.
Herodias is his picture, and my face
Will make her all he wants. Strange luck he has !
(I've heard him say it fifty times before)
Unfailingly just finds the face he needs.
Tis hard to see in this unlighted place,
With but one guttering wick—yet, even here,

It only wants the shoulder-slipping garb,
The great gold serpents coiled about the throat,
And writhing up the large, round, naked arm—
It only wants the hair, cloud-falling—so !
And, lo, Herodias gleams there in the glass !
'Tis but to drop the chin into the palm,
Thrust both a little forward—thus ! as though
Inviting hatred from a world contemned,
And there she sits, the beautiful, bad thing,
With superciliously defiant eyes,
And stealthy smile beneath the half-dropped lids,
Cruel as panther crouching for the spring.
Add but the whiteness of a bosom bared,
Large jewelled hoops for earrings—cast away
These clumsy shoes, and bind about with gold
The sleek, ripe-rounded ankles—and enough !
'Tis she, just as he paints her—nothing lacks—
Half animal, half fiend—not old, not young—
Steeped to the brows in splendid shamelessness.

Curse on this draught that takes the candle flame !
'Twill flicker out for end of all its flare—
And if I hold it up, for better view,
The roof will be on fire, it slopes so low.
Who'd choose the garret for their dwelling place ?
Oven in the summer, ice-hole in the frost,
Rain dripping through, and rats for company,
Half a day's climb to reach it—Once, indeed,
To be so high seemed but the nearer heaven !
And there was one that mounted—was it I ?—
The steep, uneven stair, three steps at once,
Sweet singing like some soul in Paradise.
And violet scents would linger in the air—
A little jar, set here upon the shelf,

Weighting the place with breath as fine and faint
As when the incense cloud goes floating up
Among the fretted aisles, and in the hush
The Host is lifted, and the organ dies.
Perhaps he gave the violets—I forget !
He gave me many things, in idleness,
As one might give a child. Here, too, at nights,
If you were pleasure-loving, you could lean
Both arms upon the sill, and see beneath
The lamps all twinkling, twinkling through the town,
And hear the half articulate music sound
From off the boulevard and the gaslit trees,
While out of heaven the great white stars looked down,
And trembled where they hung—the whole night through
One felt them shine athwart the uncurtained pane,
Like friends of old, and turned, and dreamed anew ;
And in the morning, long before the light,
How loud the swallows cheeped beneath the eaves,
Until their twitter drove the dreams apart,
And waking seemed mere joy of being alive !
But that was long ago ! three years ago !
I was young, then, and he was painting me
As Mary Maiden, grave and innocent,
Sitting untroubled at a spinning-wheel,
With sunset flaming through a pane behind,
And groups of lilies, and a garden plot,
Before the angel came.

And now, to-day,
He looked, looked twice and thrice—and asked my name !

He stirred as though the dead had come to life—
He thought of his Maid-Mother first, I know,
And would not credit, and “Thank God,” he said,

—Thick muttered in his throat, but I could hear—
“Thank God I never loved her!” And I laughed—
Herodias must have laughed that very laugh!
Full-eyed I faced him, as he turned about,
And cried between his teeth, “You think I loved?
Not I! not I! Never so near I came,
But at the last, a look was in your eyes
That said no man could love you and be blest,
And on the brink I stayed—for that, thank God!”
Then up I sprang—“Pity, in sooth,” I said—
More hiss than speech it sounded to myself,
As though a snake had spat into his face—
“Pity, in sooth, to have squandered, all in vain,
Such love as yours, most perfect man of love!”
The mesh of silk, wherein his subtle hand
Had wound me, half across the room I flung,
And snatched my old, dim, faded cloak again,
And dragged its hood above my storm of hair—
“One thing alone Herodias lacked,” I said,
“She should have smitten, herself, with her own palm,
The scorner, the rebuker”—and stepped close,
And lifted up my slim, unfolded hand,
And struck him, slightly, swiftly, in the face,
And nodded him farewell, and went, or ere
The outraged red could spring into his cheek.

So now, belike, he will not brook again
That I should sit to him; or if he do,
Belike I shall not go. To me all's one,
His loathing or his loving—yet, sometimes,
I think that had he loved me in those days,
Never so little, only for one hour,
To-day, perhaps, I were not all I am—
Perhaps Herodias had not worn my face.

THE PLATELAYERS.

A TRUE STORY.

WHAT, is it you, Bob ? where have you come from, then ?
Thought you'd gone 'Merriky way, with the other men,
South Californy, or somewhere, the place where they dig
for gold—
Talk of starting myself—reckon I'm not too old.

Six months, is it ? or seven, since you left us, Bob ?
We had just set about beginning that Worton branch
railway job,
By the new viaduct there—the fellows are much the
same—
Haven't moved on—I expect you know them 'most all by
name.

Old Hicks, he had to give up, he's pretty well done for
now,
Crippled so with rheumatics, can't get about anyhow.
And Carrotty Jem, he wasn't pleased with his pay,
So he just shook his shock o' red hair, and walked off
one day.

"And what of Long Bill?" . . . *Long Bill?* . . . why, man—you forget!

Why, Bob—do you mean?—haven't you heard it yet?

Both in the churchyard, Bob, both of them, he and the lad,

Not eighteen years old, that boy—ay, to be sure it was bad!

Dropped like two heroes, they did! I've heard the old parson say

There never was soldier that died by a gallanter death than they.

Feel sort of cut up, do you, Bob? 'twas a rough bit of news to tell—

Always chums, you and Bill—ay, sure! I remember it well.

D'ye mind that night last winter, when the long frost set in?

And we couldn't get at a lodging, for none of us had any tin.

You were uncommonly bad, with a feverish kind of a chill—

There were only you, and I, and that poor lad of his, and Long Bill.

We cowered down in the cutting, and crouched by the ballast heap,

Just at the edge of the line, huddled together like sheep.

Poor makeshift, that, to be sure! with the smell of the smoke fit to smother,

While one scorches oneself this side, and one seems to be freezing on t'other.

, he stripped off his coat, and took and flung it
ou,
: wind coming keen down the line, as though it
ld cut one in two ;
at in the teeth of it, Bill did, if so he might
en you a bit,
e up his last quid o' baccy, and seemed to think
ing of it.

ike that, Long Bill ! Why, don't you remember
day
ou sold your terrier pup, and, after they took him
y,
d 'twas for dog fights they meant him, and Long
got on their track,
vn a whole week's wages, did Bill, and bought the
back.

t was just like his pluck, when, sooner, maybe,
. we reckoned,
stle shrilled down the line, and we sighted the
ne next second ;
drew to one side in a row, didn't know there was
hing wrong,
ck, and the down express came flying and thun-
ng along.

ht in the face of the train, Long Bill made a sign
is lad,
' sprang straight into the line, and we thought
had both gone mad ;

One of the sleepers had started—none of us saw it but they—
And the thing came tearing on, like a beast that roars for its prey.

The valley lay fifty feet down—if Long Bill hadn't been there
The train must have smashed on the viaduct, smashed clean over in air ;
They just fixed the sleeper in time, but they hadn't time to get back,
And the train rushed snorting by, and they both lay dead in its track.

We buried them both in one grave, in the little churchyard by the wood—
There, don't you take on so, Bob ! they died as brave men should ;
'Tisn't many that die, as they died—'tisn't one out of ten—
One out of ten, indeed ! not one in a hundred, then.

SONNET.

ADDER than they, whose youth is left behind,
What shall we do, who never have been young?
Muter than they, whose singing is all sung,
How shall we chant, who never tune could find?
Why should we laugh, to whom the bitter rind—
Nought but the rind—of life's round fruit is flung?
Whose unblown roses withered where they hung,
And birds, the while they nested, drooped and pined?
Adder than they, whose spring is in the past,
We watch our spring time leave us, without ruth;
For us no hurrying April flies too fast;
We do but pray that each may be the last.
Grey looks the world, and waste, to us, in sooth,
Who live too long, and yet have had no youth.

THE PAINTING OF A FAN.

MERELY a fan—a fluting shepherd boy,
With doves and roses—just a woman's toy !
This morning, when the sun shone out so gay,
And forth I strolled, because 'twas holiday,
Little I guessed what waited for me here,
Till something seemed to beckon me anear
With face familiar—and, behold, once more
It smiled at me, just as it smiled of yore,
In this strange room, unaltered, since it lay
Flung prone among the goblet's shattered spray,
(My footfall brushed it, as I slunk away).
'Twas bought, no doubt, for many thousand francs—
Ah me, to think it won no fonder thanks !
Dearer how much than label and glass case,
Enshrining it in this museum place,
Had been one kiss from her warm, living mouth,
Sweet as red roses blowing toward the south !

Whether she sinned—I know not ! What was I
That I should judge ? I was not often by—
How can I tell ? And, even, had she been
Quite faultless—(fancy is so hard to wean !)
Had she come down an angel straight from heaven,
Perhaps I still had deemed her but half shriven.
For I was young, and fired with madness, then,

As wenches are in youth, but never vain
As happier souls, who bless our Lady's grace
That gave them, for their dower, a Mayday face.
A little sallow, sickly thing I was,
That never tripped gavotte upon the grass,
That never bought new ribbon for my hair,
Dreaming that feast-day garb would make me fair—
How was it likely he should ever turn
To look on me, until the blush must burn ?
No, no ! he never touched me, never kissed
So much of me as finger-tips or wrist !
Mine, was it, then, the fault ? I was so small,
And young, and ruthless—could I help it all ?
Thou God, first making me, didst Thou not plant
This woman's heart, to hunger and to pant
Within my woman's bosom ? From the hive
Of plague and famine saving me alive,
Didst Thou not send him to my garret door ?
Didst Thou not order it—yea, years before !—
How he should snatch me from my abject plight,
How my poor colour-daubing in his sight
Favour should find,—and, after, at his side,
Week after week, alone with him for guide,
Thou knewest—God, Thou knewest !—how he should be
Fate, Providence, himself as God to me !

For any merit in my finished task
Was it, the fine court ladies stayed to ask
Its price, and praised my milking maids and grottoes,
And, simpering, lisped of Poussins and of Watteaus ?
My best would they have bought, and bought my worst,
Had he not held it up, and praised it first ?
If I could blush now, I would blush for pride

Of knowing that his touch may still be spied
Where'er those snuff-boxes and fans yet hide !

The different ways of women, when they love !
I recollect how I would hardly move
A morning through, lest I should break with sound
The spell that haloed his creation round.
For me the hour was consecrate—but she
Careless would enter, piping joyously,
With tap of heels, and sudden whispering rush
Of silken robe that surged athwart the hush,
Her right to him with some slight query claim,
Fingering his palette, innocent of shame,
Till swayed his dream-work, shifting, vanishing,
As when a pebble in a pool you fling.

The difference of us—as it were the growth
Of separate worlds !—and, yet, God made us both—
Made me to go in common linen stuff,
With curly hair, perverse, unpowdered, rough,
And workday cap, with frills of well-washed lace
Puckered about my little ugly face—
Made her like some fair garden flower to walk,
Some tall, sweet lily, trembling on its stalk,
Low-laughing, lovesome, slim—ah, Mary Queen,
Even thou wert scarce so beautiful, I ween !
That morn in June—how I remember it !
When she, in subtle garment delicate,
With flowing mesh of bud and blossom pricked,
And curious sleeve and quaint, straight girdle tricked,
Stood leaning her two arms along his chair,
And stooped her head to watch him, till her hair
Ruffled his temple with a golden kiss,
While fair device he drew of shepherdess,

The rose-wreathed hat, the pearls, the chintz brocade,
That she should wear at the king's masquerade.
I ground my heel into the gleaming floor,
And gnawed my lip—so fierce at heart and sore
I felt, to see her pout and chattering
Pleasure him more than all my worshipping.
The scene he painted by the king's command
Aside, until some further day, must stand—
“What use,” she said, “to wed a painter lord,
If I be not the fairest clad abroad?”
And he must still consider patiently
Her ribbon ends and woman's frippery.

And then, against the masquerading night,
Her fan he painted, hiding it from sight
What time her tripping footfall woke the stair—
That was my one small heaven, to sit and share
His silence, he scarce knowing who was there.

Not heaven it seemed to me, till it was past ;
But God had seen, and said it should not last—
God meant not me for heaven ! Years, were they, next
That followed ? or days only ? jarred, perplexed
With strain of watching—Every afternoon
Was it ? or only once or twice in June,
I heard a spur, that clinked across the floor,
And, through the curtain and the half-closed door,
Could spy her scented lordling, straight from court,
In gold-bedizened coat all diamond-wrought,
Powder, and paint, and finger-load of rings,
Titles uncounted, cousin of the king's—
Could hear him whisper, lolling at her side,
Drawing her near and nearer, undenied—
“Honour ?” “dishonour ?” bah ! I had no whim

Of scruples or demurs—I thought of him.
For me no God had deigned a miracle,
No God had stretched His hand out toward my hell
To make it paradise and my love's heart—
It was not meant—But I would play the part
Of God to him. Was it not worth my whole
Marred, desolate life, and safety of my soul,
The soul that God had never meant for heaven !

So, once, after the church clocks chimed eleven,
And murky lanterns in the midnight flashed,
Where, sullenly, half seen the river plashed,
Hooded and muffled, through the chariot wheels,
And lacqueys' shout, and gallants' quick-drawn steels,
(Her lisping, languid lord just within call,
Maybe, deep in debauch or moonlight brawl—)
A shadow on the dark side of the street,
I scudded homeward, with a heart that beat
Rather for hope drawn nigher than for fear,
And death hid in my bosom—glistening, clear,
Colourless, minim-measured death, swift, sure.

And the days passed, days growing fewer, fewer
That still might bring her lordling to her bower,
While I had only for the fittest hour
To wait a little longer, and then choke
His drawl for ever. Still, with lingering stroke,
Enlarged the master yet to fairer span,
For very love, the handling of her fan,
Where ringdoves cooed, and lambkins skipped the mead,
And a young shepherd fluted on a reed.

Till, on the day, whose dark should bring the joys
Of mask, and robe fantastic, and the noise

Of fife and fiddle, he drew softly nigh,
And laid it in her lap. And, suddenly,
Half fawning, half assured, the hour must bring,
Strutting, with clink of spur and sword a-swing,
The perfumed creature, cousin to the king.

I marked her tender speeches turn to stone.
She might have kissed her painter, left alone—
One little kiss the more he might have had !
Slow moved he from her, with a brow grown sad—
“ I thought to pleasure thee, sweetheart,” he said,
“ No matter ! ” Then she reared her small, fine head,
And would have hailed him back—“ Ay, well enough ! ”
She laughed, “ ’tis well enough ! The ribbon stuff
And roses, hast thou knotted for my crook ? ”
He gave her neither answer, nor rebuke ;
He left her, like a man struck deaf, struck dumb—
And for that poor, vain lord the hour was come.

For, when she bade him drink, and called for wine,
The hand that poured the gobletful was mine,
The drinking cup of slim Venetian ware,
That blown from sunlight seemed, or bubbled air.
“ Thou ? ” said she, startled. “ Thou ? ” she smiled, with
sneer.

“ Upon my painter thou shouldst wait, not here !
Is not my painter’s comfort all thy care ? ”
And, as my fury measured back her stare,
She caught the goblet, and half drained it straight,
And, while I sought to hinder, ’twas too late.
Fierce to her feet she leapt, her eyes ablaze
With panic, while the torment wrung her face ;
About the glass, convulsed, her fingers clenched

Till, with its shivered wreck, the floor was drenched,
"Traitor ! aduress !" she shrieked out at me,
And, writhing, dropped across her lover's knee.

When, at the sounds of cry and terror, he,
The husband, rushed to find her, rigidly
Coiled with the wrestlings of her agony,
And face drawn out of knowledge, she lay dead,
Heaped where her gallant flung her, as he fled.

With ashy lips I cowered, and nought to say,
Like a damned soul upon the Judgment day,
And heard him curse me. For the glass he saw
Shredded like rainbow dust about the floor,
And took the horror in my face for fear ;
And not a word I said to make it clear,
I, who had played God's part, and blundered—Yea,
He knows not, knows not to this very day !
Changed eyes, fixed mouth, he snatched her, white and
slim,

In all her lovely length of stiffening limb,
Bruised her with kisses, rocked her on his heart—
"Hence," groaned he, "serpent ! Get thee gone—
depart—

Lest I defile me with the basest blood
That ever sullied cheek of womanhood !"
So, cravenly, I crept out at the door,
Knowing that I should see his face no more—
Forth, forth into the empty world, alone,
I fared—and all my wretched heaven was done.

* * * * *

MARY TRENT: Her Story.

WHO knocks? the Gospel missionary again?
Ah! sir, come in!—it eases my poor heart,
The sound of those old Bible words you read;
I half forget the moan and long grey waste
Of salt sea waters heaving sullenly,
Forget this land of strangers, and the stretch
Of swamps and trackless forest, still unnamed;
I stand instead within a chapel pew—
'Tis Sunday evening, sir, for me—the west
Is pouring scarlet on the whitewashed wall—
And by my side, the love I used to love—
(Nay, and that still I love! Do I? My God,
I know not!) and we sing the grave old psalm,
Holding one book between us, I and he,
“Now nothing shall I lack in life, because
The Lord my Shepherd is”—Sad was my heart—
A mournful word the preacher had just preached,
“Weep not for him that dieth; but weep for him,
That from his place and country goeth forth,
And cometh not again; for him, weep sore!”
In friendship did he speak, the good old man,
Knowing that Richard was to sail, next morn,

For the new land, the wonderful new State,
Where every soul might worship as he would,
Where grew a kingdom all of godly men,
Foreshadowing the Jerusalem to come.

Ah ! how we spoke of it, the time to be,
As home we walked across the flowering fields ;
In front, the burning sky, and overhead
The clanging rooks among the elm-tree tops.
My father and my mother went before,
Her arm in his. And, loitering in their wake,
Richard and I still held each other's hand.
My white-haired father ! like some patriarch king
He dwelt, so gentle and so just, withal.
Smile would he, when my mother, in her zeal
For sober mien and maiden modesty,
Chid me for some small thing I chanced to wear,
The knot of dove-grey ribbon at my throat,
Lightening the solemn rigour of my gown,
Or the new lace, that I had sewn with care
On the demure lawn kerchief—even the rose
That Richard pulled to nestle in its fold.
“ Adorn the soul,” cried mother, “ child, the soul !
What needest thou to deck thy perishing clay ? ”
And some such words were Richard's words, but then
Quite otherwise they seemed, when he would say,
“ What need hast thou of roses or aught else,
Being thyself more sweet than any rose ? ”

For I was well enough, sir, then, to see,
As maidens are ! a blushing, dimpling thing ;
'Twas pleasure, then, to peep into the glass,
Pulled out in secret from the cupboard shelf,
Where it must lie deep hidden all the week,

Among the linen and the lavender,
Lest mother spy it as a vanity.
My hair, beneath the Puritan prim cap,
Was brown and bright, and used to ripple out
In little curly waves about my brow,
When mother was not by, that, fondling them,
Richard would call "his love locks," vowing me
"His Moll ! his sweetest heart ! his own ! his wife !"

My Richard was among the first that sailed
Aboard the *Mayflower*, for New England, sir.
And soon as he should clear the space to build
A little house, never so small a one !
And hedge about a plot of garden ground,
Never so scant ! I was to follow him,
And serve and tend him in his toil, as Eve
Comforted Adam outside Paradise.
"Yea, God forbid that we should hold thee back,"
My father said, "go prosper in the land
The Lord thy God shall give thee, and raise up
A people that shall serve Him without fear !"
"And better fortunes follow there so fast,"
Said Richard, and reared high his comely head,
Standing like Saul upon the crowded deck,
So far his stature overtopped the rest,
"Sir, thou shalt live to see this little Moll
Clad finely as our Queen is at Whitehall,
With coin to spare, and servants at her beck !"
But solemnly my father shook his head,
"Nay, lad ! nay, Richard !" said he, "for none such
Ye part with all the old familiar things—
Boy, for the planting of the faith, ye go,
The faith of God, where none may hew it down."
But Richard gave him neither yea nor nay.

I and my father walked to Plymouth town.
Upon the quay we stood, when all were shipped,
And watched the fair craft standing out to sea,
The morning sun agleam upon her sails,
Till round the headland passed she from our sight,
Like some white bird that carried hope away.

Then, by and by, there came an evening, sir,
When, through the sunset, with the turning tide,
The *Mayflower* curtsied into port again.
How all we maids and mothers crowded round,
And wrung those wave-worn sailors by the hand !
Nothing you heard, above the tramp of feet,
And washing of the water round the quay,
But sob, and call, and multitude of names,
“ What tidings, sailor, of our John and Joan ? ”
“ What message from my boy ? ” “ and mine ? ” “ and
mine ? ”

Cheerfully sped the winter weeks away,
And each week added something from my wheel,
Swelling the store that I laid up with pride ;
And each week was one stepping-stone the more
Across the gulf that parted him and me.
And when the *Mayflower* put to sea again,
Upon her second voyage, forth we sent,
Writ in great strokes, “ To Master Richard Vane,”
The bundle I and mother had prepared ;
Ever in Spring, would mother set aside
Her largest, roundest cheese ; and at the fall,
The best brewed of her elder wine, and say,
“ This is for Richard,” bearing well in mind,
How Richard had no mother of his own.

And so the winters and the summers went,
Till five were gone ; and still his letters came,
And every letter told some fresh mischance.
First, he was ill with ague, and sore chill,
And fell swamp fever—wellnigh broke my heart,
Yearning to cherish him amid his pain.
And next, the river, in the autumn rains,
Had overswept its bed, and washed away
The cane and timbers of his half-built house,
And flooded all his unreaped harvest field.
And the year after, when his day-long toil
Had hewed and piled the log walls up again,
And nothing now was wanting but the roof,
Down from the woody hills the Indians came,
And set his hayrick and his barn on fire,
Drove off his team of oxen and his wains,
And plundered him of all his little hoard ;
Nothing was left to mark the homestead's place
But a charred ring of ashes and white flakes,
That the wind stirred, and scattered on the stream.

'Twas hard to sit at home, secure, at ease,
And wait till he had braved the peril out—
None knew how hard—only my heart and God !
What use was I to him, a pink-cheeked girl,
That never farther strayed than Plymouth town—
What good was I, with all the sea between ?
Yet I was sturdy, sir, in that old time ;
And, through the summer, I would hire myself
As dairy wench, up at the Manor Farm,
And scour the pans, and skim the cream all day ;
Or I would work for Madam at the Hall,
And help her woman iron out the web

Of wondrous lawn and lace she wore at Court ;
And, when no other wages were to earn,
I drove the geese, nay, even, twice or thrice,
Gathered the beechmast that should feed the swine ;
What cared I whether work were fine or base,
So it would help my Richard ? Night by night
I counted up the pence that I had saved,
Until they grew to silver and to gold,
Well hidden within the pitcher of blue ware,
Whose spout was broken—I remember well
How, long before, I dropped it on the flags,
And mother chid and struck me, and I wept.
Then, when a ship sailed for the great, wild West,
Into the skipper's kindly hand I gave
My little store, safe sealed, for Richard's use.
“ Dear love, it is so scanty,” I would write,
“ Yet is it all I have ! ”—and every time,
In the next ship, I prayed him bid me come.
“ Did not Rebecca leave her land ? ” I said,
“ Quit all her kindred and her father's house,
To seek the unknown country of her lord ?
Thou shalt not find me backward in the toil—
Thou shalt not find me shrink when danger nears—
God wot I will not hinder thee, dear heart ! ”
And each time Richard took the little gift,
And blessed me for it—“ and so soon,” he wrote,
“ As roof is ready, will I send for thee,
My Rachel, for whose sake I fain would serve
Seven years twice told, and count them as one day !
Then shalt thou comfort all my cares, as once
Was Isaac of Rebecca comforted ;
And, with soft hair for halo, thou shalt stand
And crown my labours, as the angel stood,
That came from heaven to Gideon's threshing floor.”

And I believed it ! I believed it all,
And still God never warned me in a dream !

So yet another winter grew to spring,
And the sixth year began. That spring it was
That Israel Orchard would have courted me.
He was head shepherd at the Manor Farm,
And through the dairy window, many a time,
A bunch of meadow cowslips would he push,
Or gillyflowers, not heeding my rebuffs,
Or home would walk with me across the fields.
But when midsummer wake came round again,
I said my say. For Israel, from the fair,
Brought me a kerchief fine as cobweb spun,
Lace ruffles, wellnigh brave as Madam's own,
And lilac ribbon knot. Then I waxed wroth—
"Thou, Israel Orchard, dost forget," I said,
"Thy duty—doest thou well to use me so,
A maiden, that would fain dwell modestly,
Plighted and faithful to her promised man ?"
Whereat he caught my hands, and cried, "Ah me !
Why art thou Richard's ? Why not mine, dear Moll ?
Why must thou waste the sweetest of thy youth,
Listening alone for one that never calls ?
Ah me, dear heart, if I might be thy man !"
So swift and strong, like millstream bursting dam,
His words rushed forth, I found no breath to speak ;
But when he ceased, I tore my hands away,
And broke from him, and fleeing up the stair,
I called across my shoulder, "Get thee hence !
I took thee in my folly for a friend,
But friendship's day, for thee and me, is done."
For, sir, my heart was hot for Richard's sake,
Else, surely, I had been less sharp of tongue !

Next came the harvest, and our woes began.
One day, when oats and barley beards were white,
The king's fierce soldiers clattered down our street ;
Forth from his home they drove our minister,
And proclamation on his gateway pinned,
That none should meet for preaching or for prayer,
Save in the parish church, where candles burned,
And on the decked-out altar blazed the cross,
And white-smocked boys chanted the psalm so fast
That none could sift the words from out the sound.
Then we that loved our pastor, each in turn
Sheltered him as we could, and soft, at dark,
Deep in some tree-swept dip among the hills,
Around him we would press to hear the Word.
There, while we stood to sing the parting psalm,
Just as the leaves were shaking in the dawn,
Sudden against the sky-line rose black forms
Of horse and rider bristling on the ridge,
And straight, with hoofs that thundered on the turf,
And clash of pike, and king's name shouted out,
Bore down upon us, smiting left and right.
I saw the white-haired man of God stand forth
Between the huddled women and the steel,
Crying, with aged hands uplift to heaven,
" If, sirs, ye seek the shepherd, I am he !
Spare not to strike—but these, what have they done ?"
And, calling still aloud like Christ of old,
" Lo, I am he, but let these go their way !"
He fell the first among our little flock.
But many another at his side dropped down,
Before the troopers ceased from thrust and blow,
And, toward the village, galloped out of sight.
Was scarce a woman in our company
But wept a husband or a boy stretched stark ;

Yea, none were left, but some to watch their dead,
And some to wander desolate away,
Like scattered sheep that stray among the hills.
Sir, when the evening came, and we crept back,
Nothing was left of homestead or of hearth
But pile of ashes, smoking up to heaven.

Ah, God ! the bitter winter, while we crouched
In some good neighbour's loft or cattle shed,
And but for Israel, surely we had died !
Often again, amid those grievous weeks,
He prayed me wed with him, not as at first
Besieging me, but gently, carefully,
As mother that persuades a peevish child.
"If not thyself to pleasure," he would say,
"Then for thy parents' sake—they are so old !"
Wistfully would my mother look, but still
I thought of Richard, and I answered nay—
Dear God, forgive me, if I answered wrong !

When Christmas came, sir, fatherless was I ;
And when Spring followed, I was motherless ;
And nothing now remained to hinder me
From seeking Richard—yea, in all the world
None else seemed left, that I might call mine own.
Sad Israel looked—"Why must thou go ?" he said,
"Forlorn, unfriended, to an alien land,
When home and tender husband crave thee here ?"
"Why ?" "why ?" I answered, "is not Richard there ?"
And, ere the month was out, I said farewell
To that green mound among the churchyard grass,
And tied my little bundle, and took ship
Aboard the *Rose of Plymouth*, and we sailed.
To Plymouth Israel walked with me. I wept

Along the way. That was in April, sir,
Nearly a year ago. "Farewell," I said,
"Forgive me all my faults, when I am gone,
And God be with thee, Israel, faithful friend !
I cannot thank thee yet for all thy care—
I know not words enough." Then noise of feet,
And creak of cordage and of chain waxed loud,
And backward quay and cliff began to glide—
"Farewell," we cried upon the deck, and they
Upon the quay, where Israel waved his hand—
His kind face, watching, was the last I saw
Of Plymouth, and of England.

So, one day,
Among strange trees, where climbed strange flowers, I
stood,
And asked which way would lead to Richard Vane's.
A scarlet sunset flamed between the boughs,
And as I trudged the long and lonely lane,
"Blessed be God," within my heart I sang,
"Who, by the right way through the wilderness,
Hath led me to a city where to dwell."
But when I reached the gate, amazed I stood—
"How has he striven," I said, "my love ! my dear !
Spite all mishaps and odds, to make our home !"
The house was whole-completed, blossom-clad ;
The garden plot was gay with flowers I loved,
Sweetwilliams, and clove pinks, and marygolds ;
Young chickens cheeped among the orchard grass,
And calves and kids were bleating from the fold.

I think my pale cheeks gathered red again—
I found that I was smiling, as I went
Between the flowering borders up the path,

For Richard might be hearkening to my step,
Or Richard might be peeping from some chink ;
And as my weary footfall pressed the turf,
Ever I whispered for exceeding joy,
“ Look forth, oh, love ! look forth—thy Moll is come.”
As on the door I smote, I heard an axe
That rang among the elms behind the field,—
“ Belike he labours there—for me ! ” I thought,
“ Then will I sit upon the doorstep here,
And wait till he comes homeward through the field,
And I will run to meet him as he comes,
And he will stand astonished and struck dumb,
And think it is a spirit that he sees,
And I will clasp his neck, and kiss his cheek,
And weep out all my sorrow on his heart—”
And while I thought the thought, the latch was stirred,
The door was opened, and a woman stood,
Stood there upon our threshold, his and mine,
Comely, and straight, and brown, with great dark eyes.
Upon her hand she wore a marriage ring ;
A three months’ babe lay cooing on her arm,
And, clutching at her gown, a child stared forth,
With yellow hair, and eyes like Richard’s own.
“ Pardon,” I said, “ for I have missed the way—
I took this to be home of Richard Vane.”
“ Yea,” said she, “ ’tis the place, but he is out,
Still at his work—he will be here anon.”
Oh, sir ! I understood her not, and yet
A year it seemed that I had known the thing.
“ Whose is the child ? ” I faltered. “ Ours,” she said,
“ Our eldest, three years old, come Lammas tide !
If you had seen his father, you would say
That this is he, in bib and petticoat ! ”
“ And you ? ” I said, “ his wife ? their mother ? you ? ”

Curious she looked at me, who gazed so wild,
And scarce could speak—"Yea, surely," said she, then,
" 'Tis now four years, wellnigh, since we were wed."
And, still, I could not grasp the breadth and depth
Of all his treachery—"With what speed," I said,
"Ye have recovered from your pillaged plight !
Made not the Indians havoc of your place
A year, two years ago ?" She looked at me.
"Nay, God hath dealt with us so marvellous well,
No harvest crop," she said, "hath failed us yet,
No harm befallen us, since we were wed.
And for the Indians—not an Indian raid
Have I heard tell, nay, not these six years back,
Not since my husband made his clearing here."
I know not what I answered—as from far
I heard her ask whence I had come that day,
Pity my weary look, and bid me in,
And say some word of water she would fetch.
Indoors again she went, and out of sight,
Her little urchin pattering in her wake.

My brain reeled round, my heart seemed all on fire.
I thought I must proclaim my wrongs aloud,
Must shriek my anguish up into the sky,
Shriek out my loss among the listening leaves,
Forth from the hearth and homestead that were mine
Must drive the woman and her marriage ring,
Crying to all that passed, "These seven years long
Has he prepared and made this place for *me*—
This field he tilled, this house he built, for *me*—
She may be his, her children may be his,
But he—earth ! heaven ! be witness—he is mine !"
Then the mad moment spent itself, and seemed
A lifetime left behind, and I could smile—

Wedded four years ago, four years ago !
While I was pining so to be his nurse,
And she, without a doubt, was pillowing
His head on her broad arm, and kissing him.
What had he bought, I marvelled to myself,
And smiled again, what had he bought her last
With those poor earnings I had scraped and saved ?
A Sabbath gown, to make herself more gay,
And find fresh favour in his doating eyes ?
Scoffing, perchance, because the scanty coin
Sufficed not more and better to procure !
Aloud I laughed, and in the door again
The woman stood, and proffered food and wine—
The elder-wine my mother brewed and sent !
“ Nay,” said I, “ for I will not taste it now—
Tell Richard Vane when he steps in to-night,
That one from England came to seek him here,
And fare you well ! ” And so I turned again—
Steadily back between the flowers I went,
That Richard planted there to please his wife,
Not me—unfaltering passed I from her sight.
The scarlet sun still blazed between the trees ;
Still Richard’s axe was ringing, where he toiled
For love of that strange woman and her babes ;
And, with the sound, a roar was in mine ears,
Like rushing of the great Atlantic waves,
And, staggering, I fell down beside the path,
And there, I think, I must have lain all night,
Among the hemlocks and tall plantain stems,
And swathe of mists and vapours from the swamp.

You say ’twas morning, when you found me, sir,
Wet through with dews, already dead, you deemed.
And many weeks it must have been, I trow,

That I lay sick not knowing anything—
My father's God, my mother's God, reward
Your goodness to me ! 'Twill not be for long
That I shall trouble you—I grow so weak.
“ Have I forgiven him,” sir ? I think I have.
In the long nights, among the ticking clocks,
And patter of the raindrops on the pane,
Striven have I to forgive him all—

Yea, read
Your Bible word, that tells the tale so plain
Of God's forgiveness—what, shall God forgive,
And I forgive not Richard ? yea, sir, read,
And I will dream that I am back again
Listening among the roses in the porch,
The while my father doth expound the Book,
And, from within, my mother at her work
Her needle stays to sigh and say Amen.
Thank God they nothing wot of Richard's sin !
Thank God that I shall soon forget it too,
Forget I am a stranger, far away
From meadow grass and apple trees of Devon,
Forget that I shall never watch again
The ships come riding into Plymouth Sound,
Nor hear the high tide dash against the quay,
Nor ever homeward wend my way again
Across the down— “ Weep not for him that dieth,
But weep for him that from his land and place
Departeth, and shall come no more again
For ever—yea, for him, for him weep sore ! ”

Lyrics.



A E I.

"LOOK not long on the face of the dead—
Leave the Past in the Past," they said.

"Dig some grave for the old despair ;
Bury it far out of sight and sound ;
The years bring nothing but sorrow and care—
Bury the last ere the next comes round,
Or the burden will grow too great to bear."

I said not yea, and I said not nay,
But I wept when they carried the corpse away.
I flung to the winds the flowers that were dead ;
I covered their places with new-turned mould ;
I watched and watered the empty bed,
Through the dark, and the dearth, and the biting cold—
But, lo ! no others came up instead.

I locked the door on the unused stair ;
I broke in pieces the vacant chair ;
I looked not back, as the days went by ;
I let the grass grow over the Past ;
I could not smile, and I would not sigh—
I thought that I should forget at last—
I would not believe that I wished to die.

Till, behold ! one day I awoke to find
That the whole of my life was left behind,
That I walked alone in a world of air,
A world, of all sound and speech bereft—
The Past may hold but a song of despair,
But take it away—and there's nothing left !
Only the silence everywhere.

I wandered back to the desolate place ;
I looked again on the dear dead face.
I counted the sorrows the years had sown,
I kissed them, and gathered them into my heart,
And I felt they were mine, my all, my own,
That I and my Past could never part,
Flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone.

"AS THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS."

CRACK ! crack !

A rocket that soared, with a shower of fire, through the
black——

How they trembled and murmured, the gaslit, mysterious
trees,
And the swell of the music went swooning away on the
breeze,
And she, with a face like a flower, and a flower at her
throat,
And a slim, scented glove just touching the sleeve of my
coat,
Whispered and walked ; and I knew, while I stared in
her face,
Half the men in the crowd were thirsting to stand in my
place,
And, like mirrors, the women that watched her, next day
would repeat
The rose at her ear and the pearl-buckled shoes on her
feet.
The mad, merry chime of the vales, half passion, half
game,
That shivered and sobbed through its laughter, was called
by her name,

72 "AS THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS."

Her name, that we shouted whenever the winecups were
filled,
Till swords would leap out of the scabbard, and blood
would be spilled—
The fountains shot higher, the people pressed round in a
lane,
As she passed to her carriage, with lordling and prince in
her train—

Crack ! crack !
The rocket soared upward, and rushed out of sight through
the black . . .

The rose leaves have faded, and fallen, and mixed with
the dust,
The roses that kissed the small ear, where the diamond
was thrust.
'Mid twanging of fiddles, and lamps like a rainbow that
shine,
Not hers are the fingers that plunge the camellias in
wine,
Not hers the white bosom we crush, as the valse eddies
by—
When the goblet foams over, 'tis no more her name that
we cry—
And she—? Nay, I know not ! I fancied, indeed, that
to-day
One passed me, with face like to hers, when she turned it
my way,
With lavish carnations and lilies, washed streak upon
streak,

"AS THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS." 73

The mask of despair, on her throat and her haggard
young cheek—

What of that? Vogue la galère! The rose, that is queen
of to-day,

Lurks under the brim of a shepherdess hat, as at
play;

The hand, that half-clings to my coat-sleeve, is naked and
white,

The hair is gold-dusted, that brushes my shoulder to-
night—

Crack! crack!

Another red rocket, that soars out of sight through the
black.

DUCKIE.

A YOUNG, small child, that cooed, and clung,
And pulled you down into her play,
With words that tripped upon her tongue,
Discovering new ones every day—
Baptized Dolores for her name,
Till some one said it was not lucky,
Who brought delight each hour that came,
And laughter—so we called her Duckie.
A thing that ran with wane of light,
To give you clamorous-kissed good-night,
All naked-footed, smocked in white—
That knelt within your arms, and faltered
Her little shrift, which never altered,
And put you questions, hardly parried,
Till, half asleep, to bed you carried.

A busy creature, come next morn—
Astir, or ever you were ready,
And out upon the fresh-mown lawn,
With prattling speech and feet unsteady.
A thing, whose world was very small,
But whole completed in her thought—

Sole grief, that roses grew too tall,
And afternoons would seem so short—
Much haste—that ended in a fall ;
Much hiding—only to be caught ;
With many secrets told to all,
And many journeys made for nought ;
Would stand to watch your needle fly,
Pretend to stitch, and prick her finger,
And, in mid-sob, forget to cry
For smallest comfort you could fling her ;
Sow seeds, and dig them up again
To see if they began to grow,—
Or plant, with endless care and pain,
Fresh-gathered roses all ablow,
And then lament, with tears in showers,
Her garden full of withered flowers.

Oh, Duckie ! when I saw you last,
How could we tell it meant good-bye ?
You spoke so plain, and grew so fast—
We never thought that you could die !
You climbed upon your mother's knee,
With little feet so quick and nimble,
Sat still for minutes two and three,
And snapped her thread, and lost her thimble,
And, then, slid scrambling to the floor,
And patterings in and out the door,—
We heard the babble of your laughter,
And talked of all your days hereafter,
How she would train, how she would teach you—
And now no breath of hers can reach you !

A day, a night, a week or two—
And nothing more for us to do !

A nursery, with an empty cot—
A green, deserted garden plot—
A churchyard cross, shaped small and low,
 With on it carved the name unlucky—
A little mound, where daisies grow—
 All that is left us of our Duckie !

THE RETREAT.

HARK ! Hark !

The roll of drums, that rattle dully in the dark.
Full tune the market chimes have just begun,
And every clock in the town is clanging one.
Half moon, half lamplight, all the empty street
Is filled with muffled tramp of many feet.
God ! what a great procession it must be—
And not a trace of aught that one can see.

There ! There !

That was a shout, a cheer, that trembled through the air,
Carried back and back, till it reached the market square.
And now the drums again—the tramping past—
How long can all the viewless horror last ?

Hush ! hush !

Drop back into this doorway, from the crowd and crush.
Surely they must go out of hearing soon—
How thick they march—Thank Heaven there is a
moon !

List ! List !

I almost saw a fireflash in a smoky mist—
You too ? and did you hear that smothered roar,

As though the cannon by the old town hall,
Not loaded now these hundred years, and more,
Had boomed again, and bristled on the wall ?
And that— ? was that— ? God's mercy on my soul !
Has not the great church bell begun to toll ?

Dong ! Dong !

Without hands, hoarsely sounding, slow and strong,—
And now, in the street, hark how they surge along,
And press and struggle on the paving stones,
With deadened drumming, cries, and stifled groans—
And now, an iron clash—and what a hush !
The old town gates have closed upon the rush.

You heard them shut, and hold the throng at bay ?
Friend, look at me ! those gates were done away
Nearly a hundred years ago, they say.

SUNDAY EVENING.

ALL in the shade of the big willow tree
I know the lad that is waiting for me !
With the wind in his hair, and the sun in his cheek,
And a sound like the sea, when you first hear him speak—
 With the blue of the skies
 Looking out of his eyes,
And a heart that is large, if it's not very wise—
 With a song that is gay
 At all hours of the day,
And a boat that can match with the best in the bay.

All in the shade of the big willow tree
I know the words he will whisper to me—
He will snatch at my hand, and look down, half afraid,
At his weather-tanned fingers, and blush like a maid—
 And for answer to-day—
 Oh, I know what to say !
And I know when it's said that it will not be Nay—
 And I know we shall wait
 Till the dusk has grown late,
And he will come with me as far as the gate.

Week after week by the big willow tree—
Oh, I know what the others are saying of me !
They will point to the clock that has never struck wrong,
And I shall complain how the sermon was long—
 My mother will chide,
 And the rest will deride,
And I shall flush red, till they know I have lied—
 Ah, well—let them chatter !
 For what does it matter ?
This evening there's one will do nothing but flatter—
 Down by the brook, while the others all miss me,
 I know the lad that is waiting to kiss me !

REVELATION.

I THOUGHT the trumpet sounded
In the black and bitter night,
And we started up confounded,
And with flame the heaven was white.
The trumpet pealed aloud ;
There were angels in a crowd ;
We were caught away together
Out of all familiar things ;
We were driven, I know not whither,
On a blast of angel's wings.

I thought the flame waxed clearer,
That was neither star nor moon ;
And the Judgment place drew nearer,
And the sentence must come soon.
Only two souls in the sky—
They were my beloved and I.
I thought we faced each other,
My beloved and I, alone ;
And strange to one another
The eyes of both had grown.

We had watched each other's faces,
Eve by eve, beside the fire,
In the old accustomed places,
And we never seemed to tire.
We had walked again, again
The same pathway down the lane,
And our hands had touched like lovers',
And our thoughts aloud we spoke ;
Not the culvers' coo, above us,
Less discordant sense awoke.

But, without a shade between them,
Soul lay open, now, to soul ;
Not a subterfuge to screen them,
Each beheld the naked whole.
Shrinking abject from the light,
Every smallness sprang in sight—
Every pitiful dissembling,
All the hid and buried hoard
Of faint-hearted doubt and trembling,
That had breathed no sign abroad.

Not a sound he made of sighing ;
Never once his grave lips moved ;
Yet I thought he must be crying,
"Is it this that I have loved ?
Stayed her eyes still on the sod,
When my look went up to God ?
When she seemed to prize so dearly,
Was it only this she meant ?
Did she praise me, blame me, merely
With such and such intent ?"

I thought I fell down, straightway,
Dumb, heartstricken at his feet ;
And the flame burnt through God's gateway,
Till his whiteness was complete ;
Blossom strange, from heaven's own lea,
Sprang and budded at his knee,
While he smiled amid the thunder,
And the glory round his head,
And I wept, in shame and wonder,
"With this angel was I wed?"

The slight words I scarce had noted,
Scarce had gauged their wrong or right,
Half forgotten, rose and floated
Like fine incense in the light.
I beheld the truth of schemes
I had mocked, before, as dreams ;
And each dream, I saw surrounded
With his patience, like a guard,
While my contradictions crowned it
"Tried and proven" for reward,—

Haloed round about with beauty,
All the common, weekday cares
I had looked on as mere duty,
Adding to them unawares,
While his love my life did fence,
Like a human Providence.
And I felt the Future lonely ;
I crept nigher to his knee ;
"If for such is heaven only,
Where is heaven," I wept, "for me?"

Oh ! his strong hand stretched he toward me,
And he lifted up my head ;
As of old, his eyes adored me,
But I know not what he said ;
For again it thundered loud,
And the trumpet rent the cloud,
And the flame grew blinding, blinding,
Till I swooned amid my tears,
But I felt his hand still winding
Soft around me in my fears . . .

And, lo,—the birds were singing
Through a casement opened wide,
And the early sunshine flinging
Ivy shadows by my side ;
Still the hand, that loved me, shed
Its endearments on my head,
While he watched me, grave and tender,
And I knew that he had prayed,
And the summer sun and splendour
Through the leafgirt lattice played.

A white rose-bough swung above it,
Thick with dew, and all agleam—
“Why,” he whispered, “heart’s belovèd !
Art thou weeping in thy dream ?”
Our two cheeks touched as close
As the petals of the rose ;
But I turned me from the casement,
And I drew my cheek apart,
For I said, in my abasement,
“Who can read the other’s heart ?”

BARCAROLLE.

LAST night we sailed, my love and I,
Last night and years ago—
Was it moon or sea, we drifted through ?
I think I shall never know !
We had no oar—
We neared no shore—
We floated with the tide ;
The moon was white,
And the sea alight,
And none in the world beside.

I and my love, we said farewell—
It is years and years away.
We kissed our last in a life gone by—
I think it was yesterday !
Oh ! for heaven, give me
A moon and a sea
To sail, when we both have died,
With never an oar—
With never a shore—
Drifting on with the tide !

ANNIVERSARIES.

NEAR, and more near, without sight or sound,
The suns and the seasons shape it ;
And the day comes round, the day comes round,
And none of us can escape it.

We have baffled the thoughts, we have held them at bay ;
We have hidden their rags and tatters ;
We have turned our faces the other way ;
We have talked of other matters.

But we could not stay the leaves on the tree
From yellowing and falling ;
We could not wither the buds on the lea,
Nor hush the cuckoo's calling.

We cannot banish the bird that cried
As the well-beloved departed,
Nor the flowers that bloomed when the dear one died,
And we sat broken hearted.

Year upon year, without sight or sound,
The moons and the midnights shape it—
And the day comes round—the day comes round—
Would God we could escape it !

THE END OF THE JOURNEY.

SHE had travelled through nights and days,
Barely staying to rest,
By lonely, perilous ways,
Farther and farther west,
Till a beach and a long blue race
And a sail came into sight,
And she knew she should look on his face
Before she lay down that night.

In the dust, a track of red
Followed her naked feet ;
On her small, uncovered head
The blaze of the sunset beat ;
No sense remained of cold,
Or heat, or hope of rest,
Only the strength to hold
His baby to her breast ;
And ever, with sound the same,
She hailed and questioned each,
Knowing no word but his name
In all the white man's speech.

Where scarlet passion flowers
Hung in the cedar trees,

She crouched through the twilight hours,
With the babe across her knees—
'Mid the snakes and the evening damps
A shadow, unproved—
And beyond, in a glimmer of lamps,
The fair white woman moved.

His hand unlatched the gate ;
His footstep crushed the grass ;
A shadow desolate,
She rose, where he should pass.
No trick she knew, nor spell
Of wayward witcheries—
Before his feet she fell,
And held him by the knees.
“Where the salt marsh currents drift,
And the wrack is seaward swung,
I have journeyed,” she said, in her swift
Soft-flowing Indian tongue,
“Across the rushing creek,
Through the windy prairie place,
Only to hear thee speak !
Only to look in thy face !”

He tore her hands in twain,
And spurned her out of his path ;
But her fingers locked again,
And held him yet in his wrath ;
With a dog's dumb, patient look,
Undriven by blows apart,
She clung at his knee, and took
His knife into her heart.

A SONG OUT OF SEASON.

[To T. W.

‘What you will have it named, even that it is,
And so it shall be so.’—*Taming of the Shrew*.]

IN summer-time, when all the sky was blue,
And all the garden walks with flowers arrayed,
I sent, dear love, a little song to you.
I heard, you read it where the roses grew,
And then you said, such songs were only made
In summer-time, when all the sky is blue.
So, since you nothing care to prove me true,
I'll fret you not with any homage paid,
Save, love, that little song I sent to you—
I do but ask you, with no thought of rue,
While I shall stand afar off in the shade,
Remember once, when all your sky is blue,
That little summer song I sent to you !

TRIPLET.

I.

BY DAYLIGHT.

HER swaying corn-sheaf on her head,
Girt up with poppies dropping red,
 She came across the stubble,
With naked feet, whose shadows fled,
Till knee-deep through the brook they sped,
 Where each step kissed its double.

At noon, her frugal fare she spread
 Removed from the other gleaners,
And she would have me share her bread,
 And part her cress between us,—
At noon, what tender words we said,
 With the hedge behind to screen us !

Her speech was prettily uncouth ;
 Nor sun, nor rain she dreaded ;
A soul that blushed, and told the truth
 And lived her life bareheaded ;

Her feast-day gown, some threadbare thing
 That was not worth the making—
 I wedded her with a willow ring,
 And saved her heart from breaking.

II.

BY GASLIGHT.

Oh ! the scent of myrtle faint and musk,
 And sound of lute-strings, carried
 Across the dimly curtained dusk
 Of the lamplight, where we tarried—
 The gleam of diamond-dusted hair,
 And throat where gold was coiling—
 The glimpse of a warm, white arm made bare
 For maddened kisses' moiling !

Her eyes were like two velvet stars,
 That wearied you with sweetness—
 Between the music's passionate bars
 How life had lost completeness !
 "What matter the many," she said, "that sigh,
 When two are quit of sorrow ?
 Though to-night the rest of the world should die,
 'Twould hurt not our to-morrow !"
 Oh, the noise of the flutes and the dancing girls !
 No matter all that I thought her !
 I wedded her with a rope of pearls,
 And whatever she asked, I bought her.

III.

BY STARLIGHT.

Was she a child ? or a shrinèd saint,
Come down from her niche by the altar ?
Whom the monks of old on their knees would paint,
With a haloed head, and a girdle quaint,
In the margins of their psalter.

She stood behind her mother's chair,
With slim hands folded on it,
So sweetly serious, who might dare
To stir the stillness anywhere,
With serenade or sonnet ?

She laid aside her broidery frame—
Too dark it was for sewing ;
And, soft, she to the lattice came,
To watch the starpricks growing ;
And, in the hush, I breathed her name,
Among the lilies blowing.

Her chin within her hollow palms
Most tranquilly she rested ;
If aught disturbed her dreamy calms,
Not once her look confessed it—
As far from raptures or alarms,
As a little choir-boy singing psalms,
And eke as whitely vested.

I wooed her at her mother's side,
Through tender, shy delayings ;
Beneath her casement long would hide,
To catch her innocent prayings ;
I would have risked my everything
One breath of ill to save her—
I wedded her with a marriage ring,
And all my life I gave her.

BLOSSOM.

IN the orchard grass, through the daisies and clover,
She wandered along by the side of her lover.

She pulled the bloom from the bough above her ;
And the lover watched, and stood still to reprove her.

"Appleflower for a farewell token—
To-morrow," she said, "my heart will have broken.

"You may come back when the rose is in bower,
But no summer can bring back the appleflower.

"Rains may water, and suns may dapple,
But these will never grow to the apple.

"Bloom and germ will have perished to-morrow—
Take it," she said, "'tis the token of sorrow !"

Appleflower, and the look of a lover—
Then the orchard gate—and all of it over.

TENEBRÆ.

WHEN the stars were all out in the midsummer sky,
 It was easy to pray,—
When the dead and the angels seemed somewhere anigh,
 And we dreamed in broad day,
When heaven came as close as the shadow we flung
On the grave that we passed, where the church bells were
 rung,
 As we crossed the green sod,
And we cried, for our praying, "Dear God ! I am young—
The beat of my heart maketh sound like a song—
I love—I am loved—and the Future is long,
 Oh, Thou blessèd, dear God !"

But, my brother ! my sister ! when starlight was done,
 And no daybreak drew near,
And the roll of the surf, where we wandered alone,
 Was all we could hear—
When died the last murmur of homestead and mart,
As we drove on a shore, without pilot or chart,
 That none other had trod,—
When into the blackness we drifted apart,
Was it easy, half dead with the aching and smart,
To moan out, "My God, Thou hast broken my heart—
 But I bless Thee, my God !"

ADRIFT.

EVER the water-lily rocked
 Upon the rocking stream,
Where the little clouds, reflected, flocked,
 And steered across her dream ;
And ever she sighed, " Why must I stay
In the river-bend from day to day—
Oh, were I free to sail away
 Where the seas with wonder teem !

" I know that I am fair," she said,
 " I watch it in the wave,
At anchor here in the river-bed,
 That holds me like a grave ;
What good is the sun's gold light to me ?
What good a living thing to be,
When none draws ever nigh to see
 The beauty that I have ? "

The bird in the alder farther flew,
 At the ending of his song ;
The rat plunged in where the rushes grew,
 And paddled his way along ;

The wind in the osiers stirred, and sighed
That the current was swift and the world was wide,
And "away ! and away !" the ripples cried,
And the river-tide ran strong.

Was she happier when the stars were born,
And the bird sat mute in the tree ?
When she swayed and shook, with her cables torn,
And felt that she was free ?
When the banks slid backward on either hand,
For the rat had gnawed through her anchor strand,
And the wind had kissed her away from land,
And was kissing her out to sea.

The river mouth was broad and black,
With currents counter-crossed,
Where the foam churned white in the eddy's track,
And the scattered stars were lost ;
No glimpse she saw of either bank,
But a waste of weed that heaved and sank,
Where from gulf to gulf she reeled and shrank,
And from wave to wave she tossed.

The Sun uprose through a glory spread,
And climbed by a cloudy stair,
And, "what is the thing, O Sea," he said,
"Your breakers are tumbling there ?"
"That ?" said the Sea, "with the muddied face,
And the cup all tattered and reft of grace ?
A flower, they say, from some inland place,
That once on a time was fair !"

CHANGES.

ONLY a cottage border,
 And a scent of mignonette,
And beans and peas in order,
 And a row of beehives set.
A pipkin and a platter
 Laid out for an evening meal ;
A cage, and a magpie's chatter,
 And the whirr of a spinning wheel.
Only a woman hearkening
 For a step along the lane—
A shadow the doorway darkening—
 A kiss and a kiss again.

* * *

Only a church bell tolling,
 And a funeral winding slow,
And a sound of earth-sods rolling
 On a coffin-lid below.
Only the grass grown wavy
 On a grave, where the swallows flit—
And a cradle, and a baby,
 And no mother rocking it.

*“MORE THAN THEY THAT WATCH FOR
THE MORNING.”*

DEAR, in the terrible hour
 When the dark and the daylight meet,
When dread clangs the chime from the tower,
 And like death is the hush in the street,
While the noise of the wind-beaten rain
Stayed me from sleeping again,
Dear, I looked into my lot,
And I knew that I loved thee not.

Old thoughts gathered pale round the bed—
 And I knew I had never loved,
For the thing that seemed Love, lay dead,
 And I looked on its corpse unmoved.
In the dim and desolate dawn,
While I felt that all life was forlorn,
God did I thank through my moan
That Love is not this we have known.

Dear, thou shalt thank Him, too,
 Some day, when the pain is past ;

Thou shalt find there is better to do,
 When thou readest thine heart at last.
When thou shalt have gone to the right,
And I to the left out of sight,
Dear, all the dark will be done,
And life will have just begun.

A VISTA.

TREE-FULL of little red roses,
And lilies that ringed it round—
Lilies that budded and beckoned—
I saw them for barely a second,
Where the turn of the roadway wound ;
But they left with me breath as of posies
Grown in a cottage ground.

Body still travelled the highway ;
Spirit had lingered behind,
Lost in a tangle of lilies,
That flank a long lawn where a mill is,
And water and willow-trees wind,
And, threading a vine-trellised byway,
Summer still young you shall find.

Tree-full of little red roses—
Lilies that blew in a ring—
And I, that, when daylight was darkening,
Stood watching and waiting and hearkening,
'Mid flitting of bats on the wing,
While birds, down the green garden closes,
Piped in the pear-tree a-swing,—

I, that stood waiting and waiting
For the step that has never come yet !
Did I weep, the next day, at beholding
No sign but new lilies unfolding
Where the lawn and the mill-water met,
And for sound, but the wild birds, that, mating,
Chirruped each unto each ? I forget !

NOËL.

SING, sing aloud, every maid and little lad,
“Noël—Noël—Noël—for the merry and the sad!”

Noël ! Noël ! Noël ! the old man with the staff,
The stable, and the straw, and the winnowing of chaff,
The hay in the manger, the oxen in the stall,
The hour that, through the blackness, the waking clocks
shall call !

Noël ! Noël ! Noël ! there are angels on the wing—
Set the flutes and hautboys playing, and let the church
bells ring !
Let the waits go up and down,
All a-singing through the town,
“Noël ! Noël ! Noël ! the King that hath no crown !”

Noël ! Noël ! Noël ! set the tapers all alight—
There are stars in the darkness, burning golden through
the night.
Sing the music in the sky,
And the angels flocking by—
Noël ! Noël ! Noël ! for the midnight draweth nigh.

Sing the glimmer of the lantern in the murky stable roof,
The cattle at their fodder, and the stir of horn and hoof;
Sing the tears of Mary Maiden, where the hay was piled
and pressed;
Sing her kisses, as she mothered the Baby at her breast.

Noël ! Noël ! Noël ! the snow is in the street ;
The sky is full of wings, and the pavement full of feet.
Sing, sing and shout, every maid and little lad,
“ Noël—Noël—Noël—for the merry and the sad ! ”

A Rosegay from a French Garden.

*" All lovers, all who are beloved,
All followers of Love's vagrant feet,
Listen ! I'll sing old rhymes to you
Of years gone by, when Love was true."*

Rime of True Lovers.

A. MARY F. ROBINSON.

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11

GRANDMOTHER.

BALLADE.

ANOTHER new gown, as I declare !
How many more is it going to be ?
And your forehead all hid in a cloud of hair—
'Tis nothing but folly, that I can see !
The maidens of nowadays make too free ;
To right and to left is the money flung ;
We used to dress as became our degree—
But things have altered since I was young.

Stuff, in my time, was made to wear ;
Gowns we had never but two or three ;
Did we fancy them spoilt, if they chanced to tear ?
And shrink from a patch, or a darn ? not we !
For pleasure, a gossiping dish of tea,
Or a mushroom hunt, while the dew yet hung,
And no need, next day, for the doctor's fee—
But things have altered since I was young.

The yellow gig, and a drive to the fair ;
A keepsake, bought in a booth on the lea ;
A sixpence, perhaps, to break and share—
That's how your grandfather courted me.

Did your grandmother blush, do you think—not she!
When he found her, the churn and the pails among?
Or your grandfather like her the less? not he!
But things have altered since I was young.

ENVOI.

Child! you pout, and you urge your plea—
Better it were that you held your tongue!
Maids should learn at their elders' knee—
But things have altered since I was young.

GOING TO MARKET.

BALLADE.

IT was April, I think, and a showery day—
The lane was a long string of puddles, I know,
And I saw her come daintily picking her way
O'er the slippery stones, that stood all in a row.
Full in her face the west wind was ablow ;
The mud on her shoes almost hid the prunella ;
And 'twas lost very near in the rain's overflow,
What I said to her under the old umbrella.

She'd a basket, where eggs and fresh butter-pats lay—
She lifted the lid, just a corner to show ;
She'd a cloak and a tippet of cloth duffle-grey,
And a hood that was tied with a neat little bow.
And the rain pattered down—yet we walked very slow—
But I cannot tell *you* all the rest that befell her,
Nor to any one else in the world—ah, no !
What I said to her under the old umbrella.

I can tell you, indeed, how, with prettiest play,
Began blushes and dear little dimples to grow,

And how long she looked down ere a word she would say,
Till I hardly could hear it, she spoke it so low.
And, I think, after that came a slight overthrow,
Broken eggs, that were worthy a thriftier seller—
All my fault, still she vows—it had startled her so,
What I said to her under the old umbrella !

ENVOI.

Dame ! sweethearts will come, though it sleet, though
it snow—
Ah ! set not your daughter a-spinning, but tell her,
When I met a maid in the rain long ago,
What I said to her under the old umbrella.

BALLADE OF LOVERS.

DOUBLE REFRAIN.

FOR the man was she made by the Eden tree,
To be decked in soft raiment, and worn on his sleeve,
To be fondled so long as they both agree,
A thing to take, or a thing to leave.
But for her, let her live through one long summer eve,
Just the stars, and the moon, and the man, and she—
And her soul will escape her beyond reprieve,
And, alas ! the whole of her world is he.

To-morrow brings plenty as lovesome, maybe—
If she break when he handles her, why should he grieve ?
She is only one pearl in a pearl-crowded sea,
A thing to take, or a thing to leave.
But she, though she knows he has kissed to deceive
And forsakes her, still only clings on at his knee—
When life has gone, what further loss can bereave ?
And, alas ! the whole of her world is he.

For the man was she made upon Eden lea,
To be helpmeet what time there is burden to heave,
White-footed, to follow where he walks free,
A thing to take, or a thing to leave,—

White-fingered, to weave and to interweave
Her woof with his warp and a tear two or three,
Till clear his way out through her web he cleave,
And, alas ! the whole of her world is he.

ENVOI.

Did he own her no more, when he named her Eve,
Than a thing to take, or a thing to leave?
A flower-filled plot, that unlocks to his key—
But, alas ! the whole of her world is he.

TRIOLETS.

TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

BEHIND her big fan,
 With its storks and pagoda,
What a nook for a man !
Behind her big fan
My enchantment began,
 Till my whole heart I showed her
Behind her big fan,
 With its storks and pagoda.

CHINA MANIACS.

" I've cracked the blue bowl ! " —
 " You adorable creature ! " —
" Are you mad, my sweet soul ?
I've *cracked* the blue bowl — "
" Why, its air new and whole
 Was its faultiest feature. "
" I've cracked the blue bowl,
 You adorable creature ! "

I.

BEFORE.

"DID I step on your train?"—

"Nay, dearest, no matter!"

"My pet brown again—

Did I step on the train?"

"You wanted, 'tis plain,

An excuse, sir, to flatter!"

"*Did* I step on your train?"

"Nay, my dearest! what matter?"

II.

AFTER.

"Your foot's on my gown"—

"Well, it doesn't much matter!"

"You Vandal! you clown!

Your foot's on my gown"—

"Such an ugly dull brown—

'Tisn't worth all this chatter!"

"*Your foot's on my gown!*"

"Well, what does it matter!"

LOVE IN MAYFAIR.

I MUST tell you, my dear,
 I'm in love with him, vastly !
 Twenty thousand a year,
 I must tell you, my dear !
 He will soon be a peer—
 And such diamonds !—and, lastly,
 I must tell you, my dear,
 I'm in love with him, vastly !

MASQUERADING.

AT dawn she unmasked—
 And—oh, heaven ! 'twas her sister !
 All her love I had asked
 Ere at dawn she unmasked ;
 In her smile I had basked,
 I had coyed her, had kissed her—
 At dawn she unmasked—
 And—oh, heaven ! 'twas her sister !

FRUSTRATED.

NOT a thing could I see
 But her coalscuttle bonnet !
 Fair enough she may be—
 Not a thing could I see !
 'Twould give shelter to three—
 What induced her to don it ?
 Not a thing could I see
 But her coalscuttle bonnet !

VILLANELLE.

THE daffodils are on the lea—

Come out, sweetheart, and bless the sun !
The birds are glad, and so are we.

This morn a throstle piped to me,

“’Tis time that mates were wooed and won—
The daffodils are on the lea.”

Come out, sweetheart, their gold to see,

And building of the nests begun—
The birds are glad, and so are we.

You said,—bethink you ! “—it shall be

When, yellow smocked, and winter done,
The daffodils are on the lea.”

Yet, an’ you will, to change be free !

How sigh you ?— “changes need we none—
The birds are glad—*and so are we*—” ?

Come out, sweetheart ! the signs agree,

The marriage tokens March has spun—
The daffodils are on the lea ;
The birds are glad—and so are we !

RONDEAU.

TAKE heart of grace, oh, weary man !
The longest way wight ever ran
 Drew somewhere, certes, to an end ;
 No distance but did vaguely tend
Horizonward since time began.

Take heart ! strong spirits lead the van —
Press on and reach them, he who can !
 Perchance, among them waits a friend—
 Take heart of grace !

The shore that's still too far to scan
Proves not the stream too broad to span.
 Save when the dripping clouds descend,
 Didst ever see the rainbow bend ?
Though Love seem blight, though Law seem ban,
 Take heart of grace !

DISENCHANTED.

RONDEAU REDOUBLÉ.

IF once I loved him? Dear, I cannot say!
All things have changed to me, since he was here;
I thought to die when first he went away—
And now, I name his name without a tear.

I think I should not blush, though he drew near
And touched my hand, and spoke with me to-day;
Time was, I could not face him without fear—
If once I loved him? Dear, I cannot say!

Forgetful of him? faithless to him? nay,
For he, or what he seemed, lies stark on bier;
As alters lamplit feast when day dawns grey,
All things have changed to me, since he was here.

Not him, but what he seemed, I held so dear;
A god I made me from mere common clay;
Strange to remember how, the world grown drear,
I thought to die when first he went away!

Long time, and long, I bore with his delay,
 Until, at length, his coldness showed so clear
 Even faith of mine took wing, and would not stay,
 And now, I name his name without a tear.

But you,—you came to me in weekday gear,
 And like the postures in some painted play,
 Dear, since you found me, those old dreams appear--
 This is not love that makes my winter May,
 If once I loved !

RONDELET.

“ WHICH way he went ? ”
I know not—how should I go spy
Which way he went ?
I only know him gone. “ Relent ? ”
He never will—unless I die !
And then, what will it signify
Which way he went ?

RONDELET.

SAY what you please,
But know, I shall not change my mind !
Say what you please,
Even, if you wish it, on your knees—
And, when you hear me next defined
As something lighter than the wind,
Say what you please !

RONDEL.

Oh, say not ye that summer's over
When birds within the wood stop singing !
While hands still touch in desperate clinging,
Some ghost of hope in hearts must hover ;
Though died the dream of loved and lover,
While yet the marriage bells were ringing,
Oh, say not ye that summer's over
When birds within the wood stop singing !

Their vanished hopes may none recover
In some new day, new morrow bringing ?
And shall we see no buds fresh springing
Upon the stalks of last year's clover ?
Oh, say not ye that summer's over
When birds within the wood stop singing !

RONDEL.

I WANT no Future, most dear love !
That holds not all of thine as well ;
When tolls for thee the burying bell,
Blank world will be the sod above.
I care not through what darks I rove
That lead, at length, where thou dost dwell—
I want no Future, most dear love !
That holds not all of thine as well.

Nor pain, nor pleasure me shall move,
Nor fear of death, nor flame of hell,
Nor any fable priests can tell.
That heaven alone still heaven will prove—
I want no Future, most dear love,
That holds not all of thine as well !

RONDEL.

FROM FROISSART—"REVIENS, AMY."

COME back, oh, love ! too long is thy delay,
And changed my life to weeping all and pain.
My heart makes call for thee the livelong day,
"Come back, oh, love ! too long is thy delay."
None else there lives can woo my tears away,
None ever will till thou return again—
Come back, oh, love ! too long is thy delay,
And changed my life to weeping all and pain.

THE EVE OF THE WEDDING.

VIRELAI.

SWEET mother, safe put by
My robe of taffety,
 The grey, with pearls bestrewn ;
Smooth folded let it lie,
With sprigs of rosemary
 And thyme we dried in June—
Mother, dost marvel why ?
And wherefore, laid anigh,
 Hoard I these pearl-pricked shoon ?

Hast thou forgot so soon
How blithely I, that noon,
 Stood playing at the ball ?
While through the court came tune
Of ballade maids did croon,
 Gay round and madrigal,
And, swaying as in swoon,
The lilies showered white boon
 At windblown interval.

THE EVE OF THE WEDDING.

Backward, from off the wall,
My spinning globe in fall
 Beyond my reach did spring—
And, lo ! not needing call,
Forth strode a shadow tall,
 With clang of scabbard's swing,
He, who, unguessed of all,
Had taken my heart in thrall,
 And crowned himself her king.

The ball, he went to bring,
Right careless did he fling,
 And caught my hands instead—
Oh, mother, words took wing !
So close my look did cling
 Unto the sward clean spread,
I saw not anything
But robe, that, whispering,
 Twinkled with pearls thick shed—

“ Thee have I loved,” he said,
“ Since first I watched thy thread
 Flit through the broidery frame—
Dear is thy drooping head,
And dear thy cheek's scared red,
 Shy bird, whom mate shall tame !
Wilt thou with me but wed,
Living, sweetheart, or dead,
 Me shalt thou never blame ! ”

Our lips together came—
 And, since, no more the same
 Hath seemed my robe of grey ;
 A tender, secret fame,
 Like echo of his name,
 Among its folds doth stray ;
 Sacrilege 'twere and shame
 Such shrine to mar and maim,
 And cast, worn out, away.

Dear mother, when, some day,
 For end of pain and play,
 Cometh my time to die,
 Lapped in its pearl-sewn spray
 My body they must lay,
 And sleep how soft shall I,
 With no more need to pray,
 Love being made perfect—yea,
 And lifted to the sky !

LAI.

HARK ! the wood doves' moan,
Fondest tender tone—
Coo, coo.

What brings life fresh-blown ?
What means heaven full-grown ?
Two, two.

Here's the one alone
I will make my own—
You, you !

KYRIELLE.

A ROSE in her hand, a rose in her breast,
A rose for the pillow her cheek has pressed.
The sun must shine though the rose is shed,
And I must live though she is dead.

The nightingale sings on as loud
Although they wind her in her shroud ;
The garden stays when the flowers have fled,
And I must live though she is dead.

Each month had seemed as summer weather
Could we have braved each month together ;
But Winter's come while the rose is red,
And I must live though she is dead.

We vowed that none should part us ever—
Ah God, the foolish, poor endeavour !
She could not stay though we were wed,
And I must live though she is dead.

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